

managers and senior leaders, highlighting the quality assurance role needed of leaders, if schools are going to make further progress.

This book provides good advice regarding leadership in schools today and is highly practical, focusing on many issues and areas of concern for aspiring leaders. The reflective activities will provide a range of post holders with a variety of engaging and relevant opportunities to enhance their professional knowledge and skills further, in order to improve their own practice and performance in the classroom and their practice as middle managers aspiring to senior leadership posts. The book is a very easy text to read and chapters could be read in any order, although experienced teachers would be advised to focus on Chapters Three to Seven as the main sections of this book.

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Learning in school–university partnership: sociocultural perspectives

A. Tsui, G. Edwards & F. Lopez-Real with T. Kwan, D. Law, P. Stimpson, R. Tang & A. Wong, 2009

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Although this is a relatively short book, it should not be read at pace. The book is extremely useful and well structured—and particularly if the reader is new to sociocultural learning theories as propounded by Wenger and Engeström, it is necessary to study closely. That said, the theories are well explained and are contextualised to provide examples of practical applications. The text is not essentially about application, however, but about developing a conceptual and theoretical framework to aid understanding. Consequently it is not normative, nor descriptive. The writers should be pleased as they openly try to avoid this, since they feel the discourse surrounding school and university partnerships needs moving on. Initially, due to the title, the book looks as if it is concerned with teacher training, but the chapters delve more deeply into a much wider context. The book is therefore relevant to those interested in professional learning and development and also organisational and system transformation.

The text is divided into three sections. The first places the study into context, referring to policy trends that have led to school-based teacher training. The writers argue successfully that there is a paucity of research that is not descriptive, and they aim to establish a theoretical framework to explain how learning in its broadest sense can take place through such collaborations. The theoretical analysis cuts through the over-popularised use of increasingly common terms: ‘communities of practice’ and

'activity theory'. The synthesis of social learning theory and activity theory is excellent, and the subsequent section places these in a practical context.

The case studies are initially disappointing—the early examples of school-based teacher training and mentoring appear to represent immature and simplistic partnership arrangements. The case studies deal with mentor/trainee relationships, dual and tripartite observation feedback, reciprocal teaching (changing roles of teachers) and planning collaboratively. Chapters begin in a descriptive way, but then elements from the theoretical framework are used very effectively to exemplify and explain Wenger's concepts— participation, imagination and alignment are demonstrated—and no punches are pulled in terms of complexity and differing contexts. Indeed, it is refreshing that case studies are not all 'success stories' and that issues such as peripheral participation, legitimacy and power relationships can be used to explain how learning takes place in diverse situations. This diversity means that the tentative findings are indeed transferable to other environments.

The use of activity theory kicks in as real contradictions and tensions are exposed. These are presented as real learning opportunities for individual trainees, mentors and also opportunities for organisational transformation through alignment. Boundary crossing and inner cultural dissonance (universities and schools) as well as internal hierarchical differences are taken into account.

The final section, 'Reflections', ties the strands together well. The work is not static—this section shows how the writers have learnt themselves—not surprising when it is explained that the text took 10 years to compile. They have been able to adapt the explanatory framework in a way that can be used to inform as well as evaluate partnership arrangements. One slight problem with this time span is that some of the policy references (across three countries: England, the USA and Australia) are a little dated. However, the ideas are relatable to more recent policy developments.

Learning in School–University Partnership is not only about student-teacher learning and development, but also about how mentors learn and how organisations must adapt management systems. Key concepts such as expansive learning, boundary crossing and peripheral participation (inward and outward) legitimacy are well exemplified and explained. The outcomes can be used to inform partnership arrangements and also to evaluate their effectiveness in terms of learning rather than the more normal reference to quality assurance procedures. In this way the text is extremely welcome, and relevant to course planners, school management teams and university departments. The research is thorough, and evidence is rigorously collected and scrutinised. The Hong Kong specificity is explained, and emerging hypotheses and tentative explanations are appropriate.

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