

Book Review

Extending Knowledge in Practice:

Primary ICT

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Preparing teachers to make effective use of technology to enhance learning presents continuing challenges around the world. Although written for a specific context, this book is a useful resource for a wider audience of teacher educators working to build capability for teaching with technology. Its particular strength is the variety of practical examples of technology use in classrooms and its links to professional and curriculum standards.

There is a genre of jokes built around the differences among perspectives, typically three, on a set of circumstances. Common examples work around a priest, a minister and a rabbi, or around an Englishman, Irishman and Scotsman. Something similar comes to mind when an

Australian attempts to review, for a journal with its major readership in the United States, a book published for an audience in the United Kingdom. Clearly there is potential for differences in context to affect interpretation of the book and its contribution.

Some of the contextual differences, such as the naming of the first major phase of schooling as *primary* in the UK and Australia and *elementary* in the USA, are widely known and thus unlikely to present difficulties to most readers. Others, such as the reference to *ICT* (Information and Communication Technology) in the UK and Australia where common USA usage, as in the title of this journal, would be *technology*, will be familiar to some but not all readers. Still others such as the regulatory frameworks, curricula standards and a variety of acronyms will require readers from beyond the UK to make links to equivalents in their own environments and interpret the examples accordingly.

The prime audience for this book comprises beginning teachers seeking Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) to teach in primary schools in England and Wales. Its stated aim is to enable beginning teachers to extend their knowledge of ICT in a way that will enable them “to use it more actively in planning and implementing lessons” (p. 1). In doing so it addresses the global challenge of enhancing the capacity of teachers to use ICT effectively to improve learning in their classrooms. Thus, despite the many contextual differences that may present some challenges to readers beyond the UK, this book has potentially wide relevance for teachers and teacher educators. The issues it addresses and the broad outlines of the proposed responses, if not always the specific details, are common to those parts of the world where computers are widely available, but not always effectively used, in schools.

The book is tightly structured to achieve its goals. The introduction announces the aim of the text, outlines its structure, describes key features of the text and presents the QTS Standards. These are broadly similar to equivalent sets of standards from other jurisdictions.

The bulk of the book is presented in six parts. Part 1 “describes the importance of ICT in today’s primary curriculum, and offers an illustration of the way ICT is used in a ‘typical’ school” (p. 1). The chapter begins with some general comment about the value of ICT for learning and moves quickly to a description of ICT in a typical school, beginning with a list of hardware and software resources, how they may be organised in the school and how planning for the use of ICT is undertaken. The chapter is punctuated by *reflective* and *practical* tasks designed to enhance the understanding of the intended audience of beginning teachers, and includes a useful *summary of key points*.

Each of the remaining five parts comprises pairs of chapters in which the first presents some practical examples of ICT use and the second analyses the relevant curriculum expectations and discusses relevant professional issues. The five sets of paired chapters deal with exploration as an approach to learning, textual communication, multimedia communication, self-reflection as a tool for ongoing learning, and control technology. These topics will have been selected for their relevance to the curriculum standards in the context for which the book was written but readers will be able to relate the ideas to equivalent standards in their own contexts.

The chapters in each of the five major parts follow a consistent structure although the details vary a little according to the specific content. Each chapter begins with a list of objectives for the chapter accompanied by a list of the numbers of the relevant QTS standards provided for reference in the first chapter. A short section making links to the national curriculum follows this material. The first chapter in each pair then presents a short introduction that identifies some key

ideas around which the remainder of that chapter is structured. As each idea is expanded it is typically illustrated using one or more *teaching examples* and reinforced with reflective and practical tasks. The teaching examples typically identify *learning intentions* for both ICT and the specific curriculum area. The second chapter in each pair deals with *tools and strategies* and *professional issues*. The approach taken to *tools and strategies* varies according to the specific content and variously includes treatment by schooling stage and tables providing systematic examples of how various skills might be incorporated in teaching episodes. Depending upon the topic, *professional issues* may include planning and organization, differentiation and inclusion, monitoring and assessing, and health and safety. Each chapter concludes with a summary of key points and suggestions for further reading and resources.

The overall structure of the book with its chapter objectives and summaries, the detailed links to relevant professional standards and curriculum documents, the inclusion of copious and well explained examples, and the reflective and practical tasks should make it eminently suitable as a text for beginning teachers and as a professional development resource for more experienced teachers in its original context.

Its usefulness in other contexts is likely to be more limited. Teacher educators would find it useful as a source of ideas for teaching courses that deal with integration of technology. References to specific professional and curriculum standards would need to be interpreted for different localities and some of the teaching examples might need to be adapted for content and/or software. The level of such adjustment required is likely to make the book unsuitable for direct use by teacher education students or teachers seeking professional development. In both cases they would be reluctant to expend the significant effort required to make links to the local context.

The great strength of this book for its original purpose is the detailed linking of examples to prevailing professional and curriculum standards. Somewhat paradoxically, that is probably its major weakness for use in different contexts where, although the general challenge of increasing teacher capacity to work with ICT is essentially the same, the details are sufficiently different to present a barrier to easy individual use. Nevertheless, teacher educators and others in need of resources for use with larger audiences may find that the relatively little effort required to make the contextual links would be well spent.

