

1 December 2004

These two books, with the innovative website for additional linked material, provide a set of up to date resources aimed primarily at the trainee and new teacher - and those seeking to support them as school mentors working in the Primary sector of UK schools.

\*Reflective Teaching(Already available in the library)\*

Those familiar with the original 'Reflective Teaching' will find much here that is new, the editorial team for the book having responded to the changes and developments within UK education of recent years.

As with all books for teachers written / edited by Andrew Pollard, the text is extremely accessible without ever being less than comprehensive and professional. Always practical in tone, it nevertheless consistently underlines the concepts and theories that underpin teaching.

It is clear that he and the editorial team expect the busy trainee / new teacher to sometimes only have time to dip into specific chapters / topics. Thus they have introduced 'signposts' quite literally in the margins, to point to routes through various subject areas.

In addition, there is a comprehensive index, list of acronyms, and extensive use of figures, lists, diagrams and photographs, again all designed to help the busy or less experienced practitioner navigate the text successfully.

Split into three parts, the book itself is in well organised chapters covering the usual topics for new teachers of learning, curriculum, classroom management, planning, assessment and such - as well as going on to consider the less typical topics of school improvement and CPD ( continuing professional development).

The chapters are each kept to a concise, tight format through the use of links to further reading. Rather than go into further detail within the text, these references allow the reader to access more reading in the form of extracts of papers and writings which are to be found in the companion book, 'Readings for Reflective Teaching'. Thus while the busy practitioner can gain a good understanding of each subject area through reading 'Reflective Teaching' alone, when they have more time they can revisit the topic and look more closely at research that informs it.

Another helpful tool for the reader is the extensive use of 'reflective activities'. Within the chapters, clearly defined suggestions are given as to how the reader might consider their own responses to issues raised. Further extension activities are then outlined for possible use.

Key readings are also listed at the end of chapters with brief comments about each.

This seems to be an extremely helpful 'way in' for new or trainee teachers who can feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of teaching theory in the face of the very immediate, practical concerns of

teaching practice and / or the responsibility of their first school post. Overall these all give the reader the sense that they are in the driving seat in that they choose how much they are able to follow up.

\*Readings for Reflective Teaching\*

A companion book, this book of some 120 readings on various aspects of modern teaching and school issues can nevertheless be read alone. Some of the readings will doubtless be familiar - such as the excerpt from Philip Jackson's 'Life in Classrooms' written in the late sixties and which was one of the first to draw attention to the experience of pupils in class. Others, written some thirty years later, will be less well known but have much to offer the new teacher, an example being Robin Smith and John Coldron's paper questioning the 'sort of teacher you want to be'.

As with 'Reflective Teaching', the texts are put in context with the reader being offered suggestions and questions, helping them engage in the sort of thinking commensurate with becoming a reflective practitioner.

\*The RT Website\*

The RT Website ( [www.rtweb.info](http://www.rtweb.info) <<http://www.rtweb.info/>>) seems to be a particularly exciting development enabling the editorial team to both add to and update the content of the books. The site went live in early September 2002 and since then has already grown to offer additional resources to the books such as web links to UK organisations to support Primary teaching. It also potentially offers the opportunity for readers to interact with the texts through contacting the site.

If the editorial team are able to work and update the site regularly as currently planned then this should ensure that this set of resources overall remains current and abreast of any further changes and developments and a valuable resource for years to come.

And whereas the main audience for these books and website is always going to be the trainee and new teacher, the material overall thus offers the more experienced teacher and others associated with schools a very useful ongoing tool through which they may 'reflect' further on their own work or association with teaching in the twenty first century.