

Learning to Teach in a New Era

The Australian teaching environment is one of high-stakes accountability and varied contexts, which also offers unparalleled chances to be creative, innovative and inspirational. *Learning to Teach in a New Era* prepares preservice teachers to embrace the opportunities and meet the challenges of teaching in the twenty-first century.

Closely aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) and the Australian Curriculum, this book is an invaluable resource for early childhood, primary and secondary preservice teachers that can be carried through their entire degree and into the workplace.

The text is divided into three parts: professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. Students will gain an understanding of the teaching profession and the policies and laws that govern it; develop practical skills in pedagogy, technology, curriculum, assessment and reporting, planning and classroom management and engagement; and learn vital skills in communication and ethical practice. Each chapter is supported by superior pedagogical features, including learning objectives, practical scenarios, teacher reflections, review questions, research topics and further readings.

Engaging and accessible, *Learning* to *Teach in a New Era* is a practical and comprehensive resource that equips preservice teachers with the foundational knowledge and skills to begin their education journey.

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Learning to Teach in a New Era

Jeanne Allen Simone White





More Information

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Foreword

There is much talk about what it means to be a teacher and yet understanding what it means to learn about how to teach does not attract nearly enough attention. This book offers a real opportunity to address that imbalance.

As the chapters individually and collectively make very clear, this book draws attention to the need for a major shift in understanding teaching as a profession. As a professional, a teacher must not only move beyond simplistic views of telling as teaching and listening as learning, but also be able to articulate the knowledge, skills and abilities at the heart of so doing. Added to that is the need to recognise and respond to the key concepts of teaching and learning in the modern era; an era that is information-rich but perhaps, increasingly, pedagogically isolated.

For those responsible for the learning of the next generation, developing a vision for professional learning and growth is crucial. Standards, planning a professional learning trajectory and knowing what it means to understand teaching and learning in sophisticated ways matter. That means that making sense of the educational landscape is more important than ever. For beginning teachers, the educational landscape is constantly changing, and that creates challenges for learning about teaching because policy and practice do not always complement one another; in some cases they unavoidably collide.

Paying attention to learning is an important focus for teachers. In so doing, the dynamic relationship between learning and teaching is able to be unpacked and reconsidered in order to ensure that practice is genuinely responsive to learning – in that way, learning can shape and direct what should be at the crux of teaching. Knowing how students learn and placing them at the centre of the pedagogical enterprise demands a great deal of teachers, but doing so also offers the possibility of students being invited into learning experiences rather than being viewed as passive recipients of information. In the digital world, that invitation exists in many ways; and in classrooms, the ability to create such possibilities is central to pedagogical expertise – something a beginning teacher needs to purposefully develop over time.

Curriculum and assessment can too easily dominate schooling practices and so it is important that the focus on learning drives not only the nature of the curriculum but also the manner in which that curriculum is assessed. Assessment should reflect the teaching that has been developed and employed to

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enhance student learning. Sadly, it is often the most superficial outcomes that are measured most and, through measurement, the value of learning can too easily be overlooked, or even lost. It is important that assessment reports on learning in meaningful ways and captures the essence of student growth and the development of understanding; cognition is not the only aspect of learning. Learning involves the heart as well as the head, and the values underpinning choices, decision making and acting are crucial to shaping an informed and thoughtful citizenry, and have a major influence in defining how we learn to act, and react, in social settings.

As these ideas begin to make clear, becoming a teacher is no simple task. Accepting the responsibility that goes with the need to care for, and develop, the whole student requires a great deal of knowledge to be used in ways that will positively inform practice. The professional knowledge of teaching is not always recognised in ways that are clear, helpful and applicable in the many diverse and varied contexts in which teachers work. However, in this book, the editors and authors have worked hard to place teacher learning at the heart of pursuing quality in student learning. As this text makes clear, although there are myriad things to know, be able to do and learn to professionally develop, teaching is a complex business that requires much more than training and the development of a routine or script. Expertise resides in the quality of the observations, data, evidence, decision making and practices that inform not only what to do, but how and why they are done as a professional teacher.

This book offers an invitation to engage with learning about teaching in ways that are designed to question and challenge the educational status quo. It encapsulates the personal challenges associated with what it means to learn to teach in a new era.

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Foreword

Teaching is a complex process. Becoming a teacher is a life's journey which is demanding, ubiquitous, challenging, rewarding and complex. How can we help preservice teachers both grasp the complexity of teaching and acquire the skills to enact a rich pedagogy? The tendency has been for teacher educators to focus in their specific courses on one aspect of the teaching/learning process or on their discipline rather than positioning the topic in a broader approach to teaching; while in practice teaching, preservice teachers are often preoccupied with classroom management or receiving a good evaluation in order to secure a teaching position upon graduation. The narrow goals for courses and the configuration of practice teaching can lead to program fragmentation and preservice teachers being unaware of the many facets of teaching, leaving them ill-equipped for teaching.

Teacher educators occupy a difficult 'place' because they face a number of unique challenges: working with preservice teachers who often feel they already know the teaching process, having been students for many years (Lortie, 1975); deciding if they are preparing preservice teachers for the schools we have or the schools we want (Williamson, 2013); recognising that preservice teachers come to their programs from markedly different backgrounds (Kosnik, Beck, Dharamshi & Menna, 2017); and responding to the many stakeholders in education (Furlong, 2013). Further exacerbating the situation is the inconsistency in programs, which range from six weeks to five years (Whitty, 2014). This churning cauldron of teacher education is not for the faint-hearted. Teacher educators must be resilient and determined. In our study of literacy/English teachers, some of the terms used to describe their work were: entangled, exciting, stressful, complicated, joyous and soul-destroying (Kosnik, Menna & Dharamshi, 2017).

Researchers such as Darling-Hammond (2006) and Loughran (2008) have advanced our understanding of teacher education by arguing that a specialised process – a pedagogy of teacher education – is required. Recognising and naming the process were first steps. Developing the pedagogy itself has been taken up by the contributors to *Learning to Teach in a New Era*. They have developed a unique text for preservice teachers and teacher educators. Typically, in teacher education programs, preservice teachers have one text that deals with diversity, another with program planning, another about professionalism and identity, and so. While each text in its own right has merit, preservice teachers are left to make sense of this

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vast array of fragmented knowledge, which often has competing priorities. Often they graduate from teacher education without a clear vision of education or an adequate repertoire of skills. When they are faced with the realities of teaching, they often default to teaching as they were taught (Kosnik & Beck, 2009).

Learning to Teach in a New Era identifies many of the key elements of learning to become a teacher, which in itself is a huge accomplishment – the implicit is being made explicit. The authors of the individual chapters address many elements of teaching; by using a consistent format the text has a high level of coherence. The uniformity among the chapters is truly one of the strengths of the book because it is clear to the reader the goals for and structure of each chapter. Each chapter includes an opening vignette, gives links to online resources, provides the history of the topic, and addresses current Australian expectations, all of which make it an invaluable resource that can be supplemented with other texts. Learning to Teach in a New Era is like a road map for preservice teachers that will help them navigate the complex process of becoming a teacher.

From our longitudinal study of teachers (Kosnik & Beck, 2009), which began in their preservice program and will be following them for 12-plus years, we found that although in teacher education important topics were covered, the preservice teachers did not learn what we expected they would. Part of the problem may be that they lacked the experience of teaching needed to appreciate the information being presented, but I suspect that part of the issue may be our language. Learning to Teach in a New Era is written in a language for preservice teachers, avoiding jargon, explaining terms carefully and providing examples of concepts. Accomplishing this measured tone is difficult because it is a balancing act of being both respectful and informative. The scenarios in each chapter are relevant for preservice teachers because they help induct them into the profession of teaching. The vignettes at the start of each chapter pose the types of questions preservice teachers ask (or should be asking). Having taught and studied teacher education for two decades I feel the tone, examples and content are authentic. So often preservice teachers want us to give them the 'right answer' and are quite surprised when we respond to their questions with: 'it depends' or 'in some circumstances' or 'what do you think?' Of course, those of us in education know there are no exact answers that work in every context. However, preservice teachers need something more substantial than a disconnected array of articles and teaching strategies if they are to thrive rather than just survive in the first years of teaching. Learning to Teach in a New Era will help them come to realise that teaching is both an art and a science. No text or collection of articles can make explicit all that teachers need to know, but providing them with a firm foundation will help them grow and learn.

Learning to Teach in a New Era systematically reveals some of the secrets of teaching. Kennedy (2006) disentangled the process of teaching by showing that each teaching event has at least six aspects: (1) covering desirable content, (2) fostering student learning, (3) increasing students' willingness to participate, (4) maintaining lesson momentum, (5) creating a civil classroom community, and (6) attending to their own cognitive and emotional needs. Learning to Teach in a New Era will help preservice teachers appreciate schooling in the complexity identified



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by Kennedy, guide them in developing a vision, support their learning in how to plan, raise their awareness of the multiple forms of diversity, show ways to use technology to support learning and situate teaching within the political context. So often preservice teachers are blissfully unaware of the political forces at play in education – if we want teachers to be professionals they must be aware of the broad landscape of education.

One does not become a teacher at graduation – it takes time, experience, reflection, collaboration, successes and challenges. And through this long process *Learning to Teach in a New Era* can be a touchstone referred to over and over again. It can be used before, during and after the teacher education program. Rather than floundering, feeling dispirited or cherry-picking activities from a variety of sources, beginning teachers can refer back to this core text. The concepts and strategies will be appreciated differently at various points of a teacher's development.

As a foundational text in a teacher education program *Learning to Teach in a New Era* brings coherence and some sense of how preservice teachers need to develop. It inspires the reader to think deeply but is not prescriptive. It does not advocate one right way to teach but encourages preservice teachers to reflect on specific topics and guides their thinking. It does not tell them what to think but will help them develop an approach to teaching that is dynamic, inclusive and focused on children and will allow them to develop an identity as a professional. This is quite an accomplishment. I suspect this text, although written for the Australian context, will be used by an international audience.

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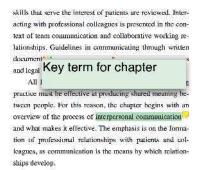
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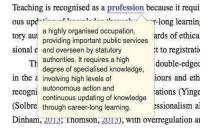
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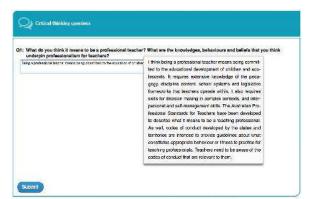
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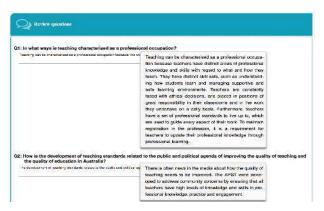
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Review questions

Respond to the review questions at the end of each chapter and use the guided solutions to assess your responses. Note that the solution pop-ups can be moved about the page.