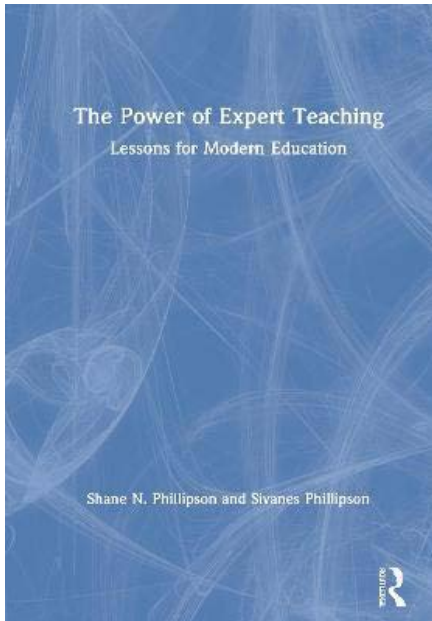


FEATURED REVIEW

The Power of Expert Teaching: Lessons for Modern Education



Phillipson, Shane N. and Phillipson, Sivanés (2021). *The Power of Expert Teaching: Lessons for Modern Education*. London, Routledge.

ISBN: 9780815352006 (hbk)

ISBN: 9780815352013 (pbk)

ISBN: 9781351139762 (ebk)

171 pages

Review 1 by Mary Manning, Editor FYI

As the title of this publication implies, the positive impact of expert teachers on student learning and achievement is something to be valued and therefore the qualities that make for expert teaching are worth understanding and developing in others. To quote the authors: "This book focuses on teachers: specifically, it is about expert teachers and what they think and do in the context of their teaching and learning." What appealed to me about it is that rather than identifying what expert teachers should be doing, the authors examine the experiences of a number of expert teachers and what they actually do.

We gain insights as we hear from these teachers from across the globe. The 37 teachers participating in the study have all been formally recognised as experts within their jurisdiction and almost all have won awards for their expertise. Definitions of expert teaching are explored in the first chapter and in chapter 2 we are introduced to the participating teachers from Australia, Hong Kong, Finland and the USA and we gain a feel for the challenges faced in their education environments. We also gain insights throughout the book from the authors who both have many years' experience as classroom teachers in a number of countries. Their background and particular interests differ however both now work as academics and student teacher educators. Shane has a doctorate in gifted education focussing on the relationship between intelligence and creativity. Sivane entered teaching as a career change from marketing and her doctorate studies parental engagement in children's success. We understand therefore that the academic interests of the authors place an emphasis on teacher education.

All the participating teachers speak about expectations that are both fundamental for their students to achieve and that influence their own teaching efforts and methods. As we progress through the book, we are seamlessly immersed in thinking about teaching and learning. A number of chapters are devoted to the discussion of the experience, strategies and achievement of these expert teachers in relation to student motivation and the complexity of the links between student intelligence and thinking and learning. Further chapters also examine knowledge construction and how expert teachers plan and implement successful learning for their individual students.

Later in the publication, in the chapter entitled “The professional learning of expert teachers”, we hear from the 37 teachers as to what forms of professional learning, both formal and informal, that they find valuable. They also discuss the role of their content knowledge in their teaching. I found this chapter to be most interesting as it elicited responses from the teachers regarding what they think are the important skills of expert teachers and how these skills are developed. These answers are then compared with John Hattie’s list of attributes of effective teachers (included in the publication’s appendix). All of the teachers placed great emphasis on improving their professional knowledge and very much valued opportunities for professional learning. All manner of professional learning is discussed and the importance of the range of peer-to-peer and professional learning communities widely acknowledged.

Chapter 8 looks at the journeys to “expert” undertaken by the participants in the study. This chapter points out, of course, that there is more than one way to achieve expertise. Career change, expectations and objectives, mentoring, cultural context and community support are all discussed. This discussion in conjunction with the “6 good things” listed and elaborated upon in the final chapter is enlightening. I won’t list them here, however, I would recommend that they be explored by teachers and teacher educators alike.

Written in a conversational style, I found this publication both accessible and relatable. It offers a case study approach to effectively prompt reflection in relation to teacher professional learning and teacher education and I believe that it makes a valuable and timely contribution to these areas of our school and tertiary education environments.

Review 2 by Camilla Elliott, Head of Library and Digital Learning, Mazenod College

Authors, Shane and Sivanes Phillipson are academics with a rich background in academic publishing on the subject of teacher education extending to an interest in the involvement of parents in the education process. In *The Power of Expert Teaching: Lessons for Modern Education* they seek to question the belief that ‘expert’ teaching is the ‘accumulation of specific skills and knowledge’ and the notion that as a teacher acquires these attributes, most of our educational challenges will be overcome.

In researching this book, 37 expert teachers from Australia, Finland, Hong Kong and the United States were asked for their opinions about student learning, where it comes from and what they do to support it in a way that makes them ‘expert’. The authors’ goal was to identify the

commonalities and differences among these teachers and to identify what sets them apart from other teachers. What is the secret of their success?

The authors suggest their book is the first to draw a contrast between what researchers say expert teachers should be doing in the classroom and what they actually do. They do this by hearing from the teachers themselves from four very different parts of the world, responding to their current practice.

The opening chapter entitled 'Making sense of teacher expertise' establishes the tone of the book emphasising that education is no one-size-fits-all model. Students in the four contributing countries are socially diverse living with increasing influence from instant social media and societal pressures. Recent PISA and TIMSS data has returned a national education profile that is proving difficult to maintain in Finland whilst Hong Kong is soaring to the top of the ranking. These are complex times and whilst the challenges are evident, many teachers are experiencing success in the classroom. What are they doing to achieve success with their students?

This book focuses on the teacher, in contrast with the work of Professor John Hattie, for instance, which focused on the student. Throughout, comparisons are made between the practice of the 37 contributing expert teachers and the accepted recommendations for learning improvement based on the research of Hattie, Professor John Loughran and others.

This research indicates significant variances between the 4 countries involved in the study particularly in terms of cultural approaches to education and child rearing. This is relevant, in that, it is argued, the way teachers approach their work in the classroom can only be understood in the context within which they teach: what works in a classroom in one culture may not work in another culture. For example, Hong Kong expert teachers all agreed that the onus is with the teachers to provide students with knowledge that is precise and accurate. US expert teachers on the other hand are concerned with how students build an emotional connection with this knowledge. The Australian teachers all believe that their students respond better to activities that facilitate the overt linking of their prior knowledge with what they are learning at that moment. A fall in achievement against international standards of the Finnish education system, on the other hand, is considered to be influenced by inconsistent adherence to a national curriculum in the recent past.

Whilst not contesting Hattie's research the authors note that few of the strategies on Hattie's list have been mentioned by the expert teachers in this book. Nevertheless, positive relationships are important and it is evident teachers believe that their teaching can only be effective if they have a detailed understanding of their students' needs and goals, as espoused by Hattie.

Teacher professional development is another point of difference as the expert teachers from Australia, Finland and the US depend on a range of sources for their professional development, including private organisations and social media. Whilst, in contrast, the expert teachers from Hong Kong rely mainly on local universities and government agencies.

In their conclusions, the researchers acknowledge the relevance of using this research to make recommendations for changes to teacher education, particularly second career trainees. They ask the reader to look more deeply at what really works with practicing classroom experts and to think more critically about education theory and research.

The writing style is readable and engaging. The format of the book is dense, however, the index is comprehensive and chapter titles explanatory. The researchers are to be commended for the positive encouragement they provide for aspiring teachers to consider joining the profession. Through this book they offer food for thought and a positive encouragement for any teacher. It is recommended for both experienced and inexperienced teachers, researchers and parents wanting a glimpse inside the classroom.

Teachers – read it!

REVIEW

Identifying Fake News: Critical Literacy and the School Library

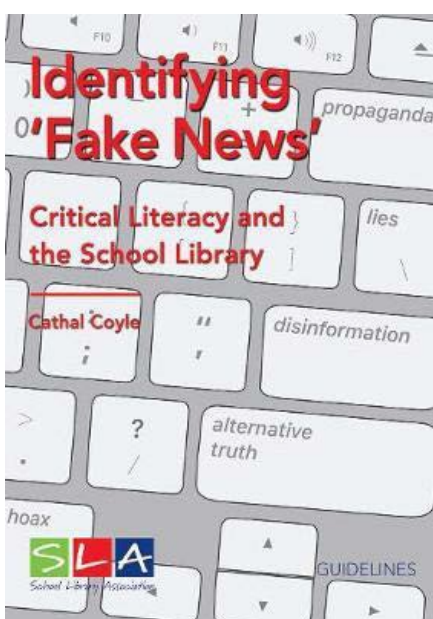
Coyle, Cathal (2020). *Identifying 'Fake News': Critical Literacy and the School Library*
Swindon, UK: School Library Association

ISBN: 9781911222217

52 pages

\$27.00 AUD

Available from: <https://www.sla.org.uk/publications>



The title of this publication *Identifying 'Fake News': Critical Literacy and the School Library* addresses a subject with which we have become all too familiar in recent years. The term 'fake news' has entered our vocabulary to describe blatant misinformation and the manipulation of false and misleading news through the media. The phenomenon has existed for centuries but has risen to prominence since the 2016 election of United States President, Donald Trump who used the term to sow doubt and mistrust in public discourse.

Renowned media studies academic Julian McDougall author of the Forward of the publication, laments the lack of a consistent place the curriculum to deal with this important topic. He notes the UNESCO declaration on media and information literacy (2016) which emphasises the role of libraries in teaching essential information/critical literacy skills. McDougall considers that learning must go beyond mere fact-checking and should involve a range of organisations contributing to the teaching of

critical literacy skills as a practice of 'being in the world'. The ability to read between the lines, to ask perceptive questions, think critically and make judgements are essential skills in making sense of today's world. McDougall commends the author Cathal Coyle for presenting, through this publication, the building blocks to a critical understanding of media and information and practical strategies to educate. I agree with his commendation.

Author, Cathal Coyle, acknowledges the challenge students face in analysing and understanding the stream of 24 hour news media. This publication is intended as a handbook for librarians to lead the teaching of critical literacy skills to students at any year level. Coyle has drawn together resources from a range of organisations and presented them in a coherent and logical manner enabling the reader to enter the text at their place of need or interest.

The handbook is organised in a series of parts such as: the context of 'fake news'; the concept of critical literacy; organisations promoting critical literacy; case studies and finally, the views of practitioners. Sources included have an international representation giving the reader the sense of a handbook that has worldwide application.

Part One defines 'fake news' placing it in context both historically and in today's information saturated society. Fact checkers are explored as an introduction to need for the deeper skills of critical literacy.

Part Two provides practical advice in applying critical literacy strategies to the curriculum and school library program. Ingredients for the development of a worthwhile instructional program are presented within a range of contexts including making the library the hub of information provision in a school.

Part Three presents a range of UK and international organisations that provide support for critical literacy instruction. This chapter would hopefully inspire the reader to also look further for similar organisations within their own countries.

Part Four consists of case studies laying out the process of tested projects and activities that have been successful in the classroom. These are suitable for both junior and senior year levels.

Part Five presents recommendations from four educational practitioners in incorporating critical literacy into the curriculum. Responding to the same set of guiding questions, they provide similar yet varying responses, all of which provide food for thought.

A supplement containing the appendices and large resolution images is not to be overlooked.

In summary, *Identifying 'Fake News': Critical Literacy and the School Library* is another in the successful *SLA Guidelines series*. The aim of this publication is to empower librarians and teachers to make the school library a hub for critical literacy instruction. It achieves that convincingly by combining resources and experienced practitioners to present proven practice along with a toolkit to support education towards a more literate society. This will be a valuable tool for

educators teaching at any year level. Index is explicit, chapters are brief, and the inclusion of illustrations and diagrams enhance readability.

Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Camilla Elliott, Head of Library and Digital Learning, Mazenod College.

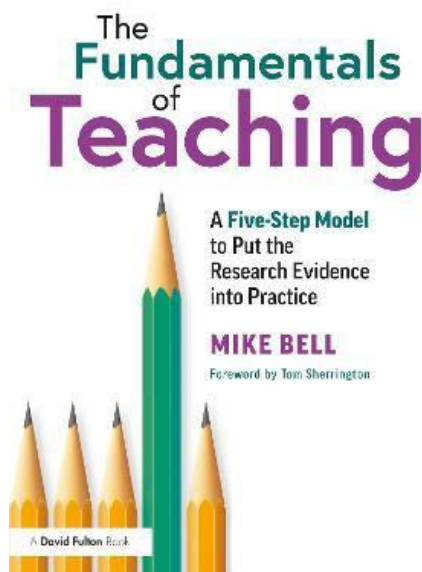
REVIEW

The Fundamentals of teaching: A Five-Step Model to Put the Research Evidence into Practice

Bell, M. (2020). *The Fundamentals of teaching: A Five-Step Model to Put the Research Evidence into Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge.

ISBN: 9780367358655

164 pages



This title has much to offer in terms of understanding and implementing evidence-based practice. It offers background to the processes involved in effective teaching and why it results in improved student learning outcomes.

Keeping abreast of best practice is hard; experienced teachers are familiar with “innovative” whole school changes that consume their time and energy with little impact on learning. The names of those whose work forms the basis of this book are familiar, but educators lack time analyse their ideas let alone apply them.

This book offers succinct information and practical techniques based on a “consensus of practitioners” who have adopted the concepts described. Mike Bell engaged me by page 4 where he lists a series of ways of “how not to use this book”. Increasing the work or stress on teaching staff by adding new methodology should be offset by replacing something ineffective.

Three purposeful sections are aimed at:

1. developing understanding of the evidence and how it applies to the learning process,
2. applying individual teaching skills and judgements to selecting methods to try in classrooms,
3. identifying any changes needed in whole-school/-college policy to ensure that resources are used effectively.

Two appendices conclude the book with the first listing sources relevant to the evidence methods under discussion, while the second provides the answers to the quizzes that conclude each process.

Explanations are expressed in a clear and coherent manner and are accompanied by summative diagrams indicating process and progress. Mike Bell chooses to make connections between similarities. His tables offer quick evidential comparisons; page 21 exemplifies this in an overview of the five research reviews discussed. His intention of enlisting teachers, from the ambitious to the demoralised, in evidence-based practice seems highly achievable.

Reviewed by Margaret Simkin, Head of Library, The Hamilton and Alexandra College

REVIEW

Seeing Sense: Visual Literacy as a Tool for Libraries, Learning and Reader Development

Hope, Jake (2020). *Seeing Sense: Visual Literacy as a Tool for Libraries, Learning and Reader Development*. London, Facet.

9781783304431 (ebk)

9781783304424 (hbk)

9781783304417 (pbk)

216 pages



Visual Literacy is a topic of ongoing interest in an increasingly digital world. Sir Phillip Pullman says, in his foreword, “No visual literacy, no democracy: it’s as simple as that” (p. xviii). If we don’t understand pictures or symbols, we cannot function in the world and are at risk of exploitation.

This very detailed book looks at the critical role of visual literacy in ensuring reading is accessible to many people. With his background in libraries and his role as Reading and Learning Development Manager at the Lancashire Libraries, Jake Hope seems to be ideally placed to write a book on this critical skill. He describes visual literacy as a newish term but a long existing concept linked to the origins of children’s literature. He positions visual literacy as a dynamic subject and explains that for this reason he has sought to provide a wide range of insights from an extensive number of experts in the field. In particular, there is a focus on the creators of visual texts, with personal accounts and case studies creating an additional layer to the text.

Hope hasn't assumed that visual literacy is a term understood by all in the same way nor that we have a common language when discussing it. Chapter One provides an extensive exposition of the history of visual literacy and Chapter Two goes into detail on terminology (or the mechanics of visual literacy). In the following chapter, Hope explicates the acquisition of reading skills, including the physiological aspects. This is further expanded by citing Maryanne Wolf's "Five stages of development" (p. 43). Hope provides a "framework for virtual competencies" (p. 53) to make the connection between reading development and visual literacy.

Chapter 4 concentrates on the world of publishing, with clear insights into the economics and the critical synergy of the relationship between words and illustrations. This chapter and the one following highlight the challenges of reflecting the diversity of people and culture.

Chapter 6 examines the benefits of winning awards, including raising the profile of writers and illustrators and increasing reader engagement. Our own CBCA awards are cited.

The final chapters of *Seeing Sense* deal firstly with reiterating the essential nature of visual literacy and how it can "enhance and enrich the experiences children and young people have" (p. 136). Secondly, there is an explicitly practical focus on what libraries can do to enhance this. This covers layout, furniture, collection display and storage. There are 6 detailed case studies describing library activity programs.

In his brief conclusion, Hope explains his intention, through this book, to increase knowledge of the role of visual literacy in our lives, to "stimulate thinking and applied use to increase confidence and awareness among practitioners" (p.171). Whilst the intended audience may have been those in libraries, a number of other reviewers have also urged illustrators and creators to read it, in order to gain insights into how words and images can be most powerfully linked.

Despite being a densely written text, I found *Seeing Sense* an accessible, well structured book. The chapters and sub chapters have clear titles, allowing the reader to navigate this book to suit pre-existing knowledge and particular interests. There is an extensive glossary and a generous lists of acknowledgements highlighting just how many experts in a wide range of fields were consulted. There is value in understanding the ways in which visual texts are created, designed and produced to inform our vital work with readers. In the end it is about inspiration: creating inspirational books, inspiring reading and providing inspirational settings to encourage reading.

Reviewed by Rosemary Abbott, Synergy Reviews Editor

Building a Reading Culture: A Selection of Articles from FYI & Synergy

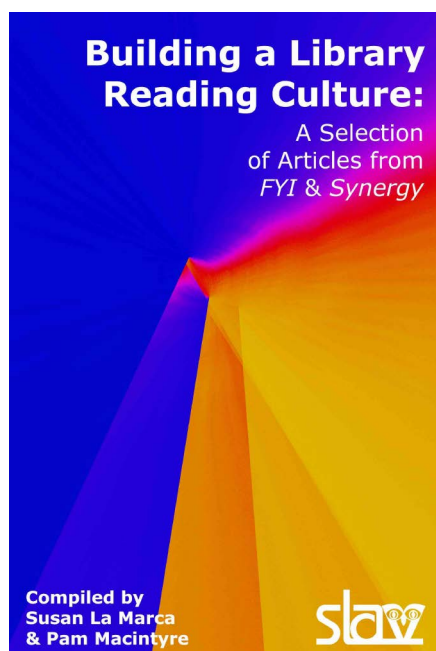
***Building a Reading Culture: A Selection of Articles from FYI & Synergy* (2021). Compiled by Susan La Marca & Pam Macintyre**

ISBN: 9780909978044 (eBook)

ISBN: 9780909978037 **Building a Reading Culture: Practice** (Print)

ISBN: 978090997837 **Print + eBook** (2 files PDF & ePub)

Available from: <https://slav.org.au/Store>



All practitioners will greet with enthusiasm a new publication on the topic of establishing a reading culture. The tone for this book is set by Kasey Garrison's extensive and well-crafted introduction. She sets the scene for the reader by giving a clear and detailed synopsis of what is to follow in this substantial publication.

There are 48 articles taken from *FYI* and *Synergy*, organised into three sections:

Section 1 *Research and Reflection* presents a diverse range of research studies from academics and practitioners from around the globe.

Section 2 *Practice* details the ways in which a wide range of teacher librarians have approached the challenges of engaging readers

Section 3 *Organisations* presents a range of initiatives, both local and global, making a positive contribution to the areas of literacy and reading

It seems most appropriate to conclude this very brief review with a quote from Kasey Garrison in her introduction (p. 11):

The wealth of knowledge and practice shared by these teacher librarians and researchers gives readers a massive toolbox of tried and true strategies for building a library reading culture

Note: A more extensive review of *Building a Library Reading Culture* will be published in the next issue of *Synergy*

Reviewed by Rosemary Abbott, Synergy Reviews Editor

At a Glance

Brief listings, with both a local and global focus.

ACER

[Driving School Improvement 2nd ed](#)

2021 publication providing strategies and tools for improvement

National Literacy Trust

[Girls and Aspirations](#)

November 2020 research report containing key findings

[Aspirations, literacy and gender](#)

March 2020. Examines the differences between girls and women and boys and men and their aspirations and the key role of literacy in achieving them

ISTE

[Hottest topics in Edtech in 2021](#)

Latest trends in educational technology with new topics emerging from the challenges of 2020

[10 Resources to Boost Student Media Literacy](#)

Tips, videos, curricula and lesson plans to help educators guide students in navigating the media landscape. October 2020

Media Literacy Now

U.S. Non profit organisation with the goal of making media literacy widely understood and accepted as essential element of education

[Resources for Educators](#) April 2021

UNESCO

[Personal Data and Privacy Protection in Online Learning](#)

A handbook for students, teachers and parents

ASCD Recent Publications

[How To Look at Student Work to Uncover Student Thinking](#)

Published April 2021. Focus on ways to look at student work to understand thought processes and understanding

[Improve Every Lesson Plan with SEL](#)

April 2021. Provides guidance on how to incorporate social and emotional learning into lesson planning

Assessing With Respect: Everyday Practices That Meet Students' Social and Emotional Needs

March 2021. Examines the critical intersection between assessment and social and emotional learning (SEL)

Student Learning Communities

November 2020. SLCs provide students with a structured way to solve problems, share insight, and help one another continually develop new skills and expertise.

Giving Students a Say

January 2021. Considers how educators can improve assessment practices so that the results are accurate, meaningful, informative, and fair

Contributions to this section are warmly welcomed, so please let us know if you discover a wonderful new resource you wish to share with your colleagues. Your review only needs to be a couple of lines.

Rosemary Abbott

Synergy Reviews Editor

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