

BOOK REVIEW

TEACHING AT UNIVERSITY

by

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Reviewed by John Barnes¹

Even though this book is five years old, having read it recently, I felt it important to share my reading experience. This book is aimed at graduate students who are at the commencement of their university teaching careers. However, it will be useful to all who teach at university, as it includes many recent developments in teaching which will benefit even seasoned tutors and lecturers.

The introduction is especially useful to help new graduates organize their teaching duties and is relevant to experienced tutors and lecturers who might not have kept their portfolios up-to-date. There are also helpful hints on choice of language to be used in class.

This 10-chapter book spreads over 210 pages. Each chapter is written in a crisp and clear style and features numerous useful summary tables and diagrams to illustrate the key concepts of the chapter and a so-called “health warning box” which serves as a cautionary note from the authors on the topics discussed. Most chapters conclude with a section detailing further reading:

- Chapter 1 - *Theory and Practice* – Comprising: *What is the point of learning theory? How do adults learn? What is the Curricula Framework for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education? What next? We would all benefit from reviewing this chapter in light of new developments in theory of education.*
- Chapter 2 - *Your First Lectures* – Comprising: *Why are you lecturing? How do you plan? Doing it-What works? Post graduate fears; Measuring the learning and getting feedback on your teaching.* It would be particularly helpful to those who want to improve their planning.
- Chapter 3 - *Your First Tutorials* – Comprising: *What is the purpose of tutorials? How do groups work? Planning; What problems do post graduate students worry about? Evaluating and learning and teaching in tutorials.* With a growing emphasis within the graduate school of business on activity based learning it may be that tutorials will increase in importance as a supplement to out of class room activities.
- Chapter 4 - *Your First Electronic Discussions* –Comprising: *Some key aspects of effective e-leaning environments; What does e-learning mean in your department at this time? Your role in e-tutoring; Do you have the skills for e-tutoring? Interactive e-learning: getting started; More on managing e-learning discussions; Integrating web based resources into your discussions.* As we are confronting this new technology we ought to review this chapter and the additional readings suggested as a means of ensuring that delivery of our e-learning program is truly top flight.
- Chapter 5 - *Your First Laboratory or Fieldwork Practicals* - Comprising: *What is your role; What will you need to do? Fieldwork; Post graduate fears.*

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As learning by doing is being emphasized, we all ought to read this chapter and apply it as appropriate.

- Chapter 6 - *Assessment of and Feedback to Students* - Comprising: *What are the key principles of assessment/ Your role in assessment; Assessing different types of activity; Giving students good feedback; Management of Assessment; Detecting and preventing plagiarism.* This is a very important chapter. How many of us insist that our students use Turn It In for all their assignments? Chapter 7 - *Student Relations* - Comprising: *Set boundaries for yourself; Where are all the sources of support? Dealing with diversity; Dealing with discrimination; Dealing with difficult students; Students in difficulty.* This is a very useful chapter as universities have a wider diversity of students, faculty, and curricula.
- Chapter 8 - *Supervising Undergraduate Projects and Dissertations* - Comprising: *Before you agree to supervise; What is your role? What is research at the undergraduate level? Helping students to manage the research process; Getting your own research finished on time.* A must-read as many students at the graduate level experience serious difficulty in developing their analytical skills after being weaned on only developing their descriptive skills prior to entering graduate programs.
- Chapter 9 - *Program Validation and Module Management - Quality Assurance and All That.* Comprising: *Why do you need to read this chapter? Why is quality in learning and teaching important? What, exactly, do we mean by quality? How do we manage quality? Where is your place in all this?* This chapter is very useful indeed as cuts through a lot of the wordiness typical of quality manuals and gets down to the essentials of the topic and related activities. This will be of special interest with our external review by CHE next year.
- Chapter 10 - *Feedback on your teaching and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)* - Comprising: *Collecting evidence yourself; Collecting evidence from your students; Collecting evidence from peers, colleagues and mentors; Gathering information about teaching.* We all need to read this. As the world continues to move forward it is easier than ever to fall behind just by standing still and not keeping current with developments in educational learning and within our specific field of teaching.

An extensive selection of references is provided for readers to follow up and gain deeper insight into issues of specific personal interest. Faculty will enjoy reading this book and pick up some useful aids to their lecturing.