

BOOK REVIEWS

TEACHING COMPUTING UNPLUGGED IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: EXPLORING PRIMARY COMPUTING THROUGH PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES AWAY FROM THE COMPUTER

Reviewed by Dr E. Theodotou, University of East London

Computing is nowadays an essential part of the curriculum of all schools, all around the world. It is a topic of great importance in the teaching and learning process of the students, as well as in the teachers' roles to support them in developing such skills. However, access to computer hardware is sometimes limited in primary schools for a variety of reasons. Therefore, teachers are in a dilemma, trying to offer an exciting and meaningful learning journey to their students and, at the same time, make sure that they meet all the standards and expectations of their profession.

This book, by Helen Caldwell and Neil Smith, is written to address this matter and suggests pioneering ways to overcome such difficulties. It thoroughly explains the content of computing by breaking down this term into its core components, providing practical examples and a very good rationale about the importance of unplugged activities in teaching computing skills. Through a variety of lesson plans, it sets an exciting example of meeting the teachers' and National Curriculum standards, by explaining how computational thinking is strongly linked with different

activities that have nothing to do with computers.

What is really interesting in this book is that it considers the use of the arts, such as music and drama, and everyday activities, such as cooking, to help students develop computing skills. These activities set a fun and engaging environment for the teacher and the students, by using resources such as spaghetti or marshmallow to trigger students' attention. It promotes the practices of thinking outside the box and of being creative when teaching young students.

This is a valuable resource in pioneering ways of teaching and could prove to be an asset in Initial Teacher Training programmes as a core reading book. It would also be of use to teachers in primary schools as an effort to meet the challenges in accessing computer systems, as well as to teach the school subjects in a different and innovative way. ■

Author: H. Caldwell & N. Smith

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PUBLISHING AND THE ACADEMIC WORLD. PASSION, PURPOSE AND POSSIBLE FUTURES

Reviewed by Rachel Shanks,

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Now that there are national exercises to monitor and rank universities, faculties and academics, such as the Research Excellence Framework in the UK and the H index worldwide, academics are under ever more pressure to publish (or perish), to perform, and to compete against one another. There have never been so many places to publish, and early career academics have never needed publications as much as they do now. Into this uncertain environment comes a useful, thoughtful and ambitious book, the central objective of which is to inform and assist academics who want to be more successful at being published.

The book is made up of an introduction and 11 chapters written by an assortment of academics from various disciplines (science, social sciences and education) and based in different countries from across the developed world. The book is divided into three parts: mapping the publication landscape; writing for publication – learning from successful voices; and further challenges and possibilities. By reading the book, aspiring and established academics can discover what they may have, hitherto, not known they didn't know, or what Donald Rumsfeld called 'unknown unknowns'.

In the first chapter Andy Hargreaves and Ciaran Sugrue set the scene of the modern publishing world for academics that includes not only books and journal articles but also blogs and tweets. By providing an example of how social media can be used, the authors alert us to the fact that the book is going to challenge our preconceived ideas of what constitutes academic writing. Sugrue addresses the ever-increasing number of avenues to publish in chapter 2, 'The panoply of publications', and highlights how the

publishing landscape does not stay still for long. He also highlights the particular issues facing doctoral candidates as they seek to understand what can appear to be the unwritten rules of publishing. If you have yet to get to grips with journal rankings and metrics then chapter 3, 'Calculating journal rankings', by Lutz Bornmann, Werner Marx and Robin Haunschild should be helpful and it, along with all the other chapters, has a useful set of references to explore issues in greater depth.

In the second part of the book, established authors provide useful accounts of their journeys into and through the publishing process. This includes an account of the editors' research interviews with six scholars in chapter 4, 'Voices of experience'. Barbara Grant provides a very practical account of writing a journal article in chapter 5, 'Getting my Work out There', from 'having an idea/something to say' to receiving reviewers' feedback and not giving up. This chapter contains essential advice on choosing a journal, revising, editing, proofing and responding to reviewers' comments. In chapter 6, 'Understanding the peer review process', Tony Bush details important issues to be aware of before submitting your work, in order to minimise its chances of rejection. For those who are yet to be persuaded of the usefulness of blogging in academia, or the use of other online tools, Pat Thomson, in chapter 7, 'Text work/identity work online', makes a strong case for academics to change their opinions by illustrating the importance of communicating with a wider audience within and outwith academia. In chapter 8, 'In praise of knowledge bureaucracies: speaking to international audiences', Sławomir Magala provides a different tone and style to the previous chapters

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with a more, dare I say it, academic piece on bureaucracies of knowledge and how they can be challenged.

Of particular interest, I believe, will be the chapter on how to publish journal articles from a PhD thesis (chapter 9, 'From a doctoral dissertation to journal articles' by Sefika Mertkan). While in some disciplines a monograph is the preferred publication to be produced from a doctoral thesis, many of the points made in this chapter would hold true whatever the chosen output. Simon McGrath's 'Playing the game' (chapter 10) addresses the advantages that academics working in developed countries have, in terms of being published, and what can be done to rectify this. Finally, the editors conclude in chapter 11 by returning to the issues covered in the book, including the dilemma of being overly strategic in our writing and publishing attempts.

What can sometimes be a drawback of an edited book, namely multiple and differing perspectives, some readers may find disconcerting or even frustrating. However, I feel these 'multi-versal' voices are an advantage in a book like this. By having a varied collection of authors from different fields, with particular, and not always compatible, perspectives, and differing writing styles, the editors illustrate that there are many ways to think about writing, just as there are many ways to approach writing and there are various, sometimes intertwining, paths into the published world.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book for anyone who wishes to challenge their own thinking and approach to being published, no matter how long their own list of publications. ■

RONA TUTT'S GUIDE TO SEND AND INCLUSION

Reviewed by Ruth Hunt,

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Rona Tutt, former president of the National Association of Head Teachers, has vast experience within education, and particularly championing the education of children, as is evident from the scope of her Guide to SEND & inclusion. This slim volume offers a brief history of attitudes to SEN, before beginning an analysis of SEND (special education needs and disability) reforms within the Children and Families Act 2014 and finally builds to an argument for better and more flexible support for all those who require a specific personalised learning experience.

Tutt's introduction and opening chapter outlining the changes effected by the 2014 Children and Families Act and the 2015 SEND Code of Practice give the reader a helpful overview of the stated aims of the reforms, and begin to offer a discussion of the benefits and challenges facing children, their families and schools. In clear terminology Tutt describes systems of working in schools, local authorities and multi-academy trusts (MATs). This discussion of what teachers, children and families might see as 'everyday practice' will be helpful for the new or in-training practitioner in England, rather than experienced classroom staff. Some comment is offered, but these sections are largely descriptive of practice, rather than critical analysis of policy and practice, aiming this book squarely at new students or new practitioners. For students or courses that seek to mix theory and practice, these sections are a helpful reference guide for terminology and daily practice. In keeping with the accessible style, the book contains useful acronym lists, explanations of terms and suggested websites. These again are a useful addition for students with little or no experience of the maintained sector in England, as are descriptions of alternative

provisions, virtual schools and residential special schools.

In a similar way, chapters 2 and 5, which focus on the variety of additional educational support that children may need or benefit from, might be a useful awareness-raising read for a new practitioner. A range of additional needs, ranging from social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) to cognition and speech needs, are discussed briefly, with slightly more emphasis placed on autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and overlapping diagnoses, such as sensory processing disorder. Although the focus of these two chapters is different, both contain short descriptions of a variety of physical and mental health issues and a range of syndromes and needs. Brief suggestions are made for the education or school needs that may result, and are necessarily general. These chapters could be useful in highlighting to new practitioners or students that the children they teach may have a variety of different needs for a range of reasons. The drawback to this wide-ranging approach is that the thread of argument is sometimes lost in a list of sections describing different syndromes or diagnoses and breakout boxes describing terminology.

Tutt's overarching theme, that SEND provision should be flexible and properly funded, will win support from new practitioners, students and established education and care staff. In this respect, the Guide to SEND & inclusion is a vision statement for how children's ability (as opposed to attainment, as Tutt carefully distinguishes) can be supported with dynamic and responsive access to a range of expertise and facilities. At times this overarching theme is in danger of being swamped by breakout boxes, bullet-

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pointed sections and case studies. Each of these may be useful as illustration for students or new practitioners, but the number of differently formatted sections begins to impede the flow of the chapters. This slight blurring of the clarity of the message is also seen in sections where other countries' practices are briefly brought into the spotlight, with different chapters referring to SEN education in 'Europe', New Zealand and Scotland. As the opening sections place the book's discussions firmly within an English context, these short sections on international practices feel slightly separate from the main argument.

Rona Tutt's guide to SEND & inclusion provides a rich description of many essential terms, services and practical daily approaches to supporting inclusion. For a beginning teacher or a student practitioner, this book would be an ideal reference for acronyms and services, and a useful signpost for links to further information. Students using this guide would be offered a clear description of SEN changes, with some discussion of potential issues around SEND legislation and practice. The many case studies provide descriptions of multiple settings' approach to inclusion, although these are not supported by discussion questions or reflections that would help the reader to analyse or critique these descriptions, and sometimes impede the flow of the text. As a student-practitioner's first text, this book offers an overview of legislation and practice, allowing a window into a world of acronyms and diverse provision. ■