

## Book Review

Warren Kidd & Gerry Czerniawski (2011),  
*Teaching Teenagers:  
A Toolbox for Engaging and Motivating Learners*,  
London, California, New Delhi and Singapore, SAGE Publications,  
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This book is recommended for trainee, new and experienced teachers teaching teenagers. The aim of this book is to support teachers by providing them with a wide range of teaching 'ideas', in the form of practical advice, to help them engage and motivate teenage learners. The authors, both of whom are experienced teachers, stress that motivation and engagement play a central role in the learning process and that all learners can encounter success.

The book is an easy-to-read but at the same time profound and insightful resource for teachers who want to extend their repertoire of motivational skills and become inspirational teachers. It offers teachers a practical guide that is informed by research and theory. The book is divided into 13 chapters, with each chapter focusing on a different aspect of teaching and learning. These include first encounters, assessment strategies, building an effective and inspiring climate, cooperative learning, e-learning, classroom management, homework, differentiation strategies, learning how to learn and utilizing learner voice. Each chapter is structured in the same manner and includes the following:

- Problem Solving - the issues related to that particular aspect of teaching
- Context - explores why these issues matter and how they link and affect student engagement and motivation

- Toolbox – the book contains 220 practical teaching ideas to help teachers improve their practice
- Questions for Professional Development – aimed at encouraging reflection on one’s own practice
- Checklist – a list of important principles to remember when building one’s ‘toolbox’
- Further reading – suggested books related to that aspect of teaching and learning with a brief description of what each book provides.

The teaching ‘ideas’ are the main focus of this book. The ideas, or suggestions, are written with a positive tone and are designed to address the key issues and challenges faced by teachers. The ideas should be approached with an open mind. An idea that might sound farfetched to start with might in fact be a great way of creating that ‘wow’ factor once the idea is modified and made applicable to a specific subject or context. For example, in the section that talks about experimenting with seating arrangements, teachers are encouraged to look at the possibilities that different arrangements offer and reflect on certain assumptions that are taken for granted, such as the notion that the teacher’s desk has to be at the front. The authors acknowledge the limitations and difficulties faced by teachers, and try to give alternatives and adaptations. For example, many ideas are based on the assumption that teachers have their base-room, but the authors are aware that this is not always the case and try to suggest alternatives. Maybe one criticism that could be made is that given that both authors are specialised in humanities, the ideas tend to lean towards humanities subjects and might be difficult to adapt to a subject like mathematics. Including ideas inspired from good practice in other subjects other than humanities would render this publication more complete.

Two very helpful features that are found throughout the text are Reflection Points and Best Practice. The former are meant to help a teacher stop and think how to contextualise the ideas and apply them to her or his practice. The latter provide further suggestions based on what practitioners have found useful. At the end of each chapter the authors include chapter links to help teachers relate the ideas from one chapter to those in other chapters. A reader could choose to read the chapters as stand-alone and there is no need to read the chapters in order. In fact this is the kind of book that a teacher is meant to go back to from time to time. For example, it is ideal to refer to before encountering a group of students for the first time, when needing inspiration or support to revamp teaching strategies, or when finding it difficult to engage and motivate a group of students. It is a good idea to have pen and paper at hand when reading the book to jot down points.

The Reflection Points and the Questions for Professional Development help teachers think outside the box and are amongst the strongest features of this

book. Teachers are encouraged to consider options they might not have considered before. Certain observations made by the authors might also challenge one's notions of what effective teaching is all about. The authors talk directly to the reader making it feel like a personal encounter with someone who understands the situation and is offering support. Another strong feature of this book is that definitions of terms that are commonly confused are explained very clearly using simple terms.

Teachers and teacher educators should find this book an excellent resource that helps them reflect on their current practice and develop new skills. It provides effective ideas to add to their 'toolbox' in their pursuit to become inspirational teachers. I strongly recommend this book to new and experienced teachers alike. Even though the book is aimed at teachers teaching teenagers, many ideas provided in the book are transversal in nature and could be useful and inspirational for teachers teaching younger students and anyone working with teenagers in a less structured setting, such as youth workers.

