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Comparative Book Review

Advances in second language teacher education: Recent resources for language teacher educators

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KATHLEEN BAILEY, *Language teacher supervision: A case-based approach* (Cambridge Language Teaching Library). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2006). Pp. xvi + 384. ISBN-10: 0521547458.

ANNE BURNS & JACK C. RICHARDS (eds.), *Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2009). Pp. viii + 325. ISBN-10: 0521756847.

CHRISTINE COOMBE, MASHAEL AL-HAMLY, PETER DAVIDSON & SALAH TROUDI (eds.), *Evaluating teacher effectiveness in ESL/EFL contexts*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press (2007). Pp. iv + 252. ISBN-10: 0472032097.

ANGI MALDEREZ & MARTIN WEDELL, *Teaching teachers: Processes and practices*. London: Continuum (2007). Pp. xvi + 171. ISBN-10: 0826484913.

TONY WRIGHT & ROD BOLITHO, *Trainer development*. www.lulu.com (2007). Pp. 264. ISBN-10: 1847532322.

Introduction

Within the broad field covered by the term 'second language teacher education' (SLTE), terminological clarity is important, and one approach to this is to identify categories of individual by their place or level within a functional hierarchy defined by the role each plays at a particular time. Woodward (1988) has referred to such a set of levels as a 'stack' and Tony Wright makes a similar distinction in the Burns & Richards volume reviewed here. Both Woodward and Wright emphasise that the learner should not be seen as being at the 'bottom' level, a point more graphically made by a diagram in the Wright & Bolitho book (p. 208) in which the learner is shown to be at the centre of a series of concentric circles. My own representation of the stack uses numbers merely for ease of reference. At what we might call level 0 is the language learner, or pupil. At level 1 is the language teacher. This teacher may actually be a trainee on teaching practice, being supervised by a university teacher educator (who will therefore be at level 2) and/or a school-based mentor, who – though also a teacher – in the role of mentor functions as a teacher educator, i.e. level 2 vis-à-vis the trainee. A rather more experienced teacher in the same school may be following an in-service course, and those with responsibility for teaching this will also be teacher educators at level 2. At level 3 of the hierarchy is the rather rare category of individual who is charged with promoting

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the professional development of those at level 2. This might be the same university teacher educator who supervises trainees on teaching practice but also in a level 3 role runs mentor preparation courses and supervises the work of these 'cooperating teachers'; it may equally be someone who within a cascade project teaches those who will go on to teach those who will teach teachers. At this point, we typically see a switch in terminology to 'trainer trainer', driven by stylistic economy rather than any conceptual repositioning.

In approaching the books reviewed here, I had in mind three groups of potential readers. The first of these, at level 2 of the hierarchy described above, consists of novice language teacher educators following a course designed to equip them with the necessary new knowledge, skills and awareness or self-directedly seeking support for the teacher education work (level 1) in which they are already involved. The second group, also at level 2, comprises relatively experienced teacher educators looking for new insights and ideas that may be of use in their work with teachers at level 1 or that may contribute in a broader sense to their own continuing professional development. The third group is that at level 3 – trainer trainers running courses for or facilitating the work of groups or individuals at level 2, whose motivations are similar in that they are also searching for suitable reading materials for those they are working with and, again, input to their own development. A measure of self-interest lay behind this categorisation: at the time of writing this review, I was planning an elective MA module on 'Learning to Train' (i.e. for would-be/novice teacher educators) and therefore actively looking for materials likely to be relevant to course participants' need for preparatory/follow-up readings and for my own purposes as a trainer trainer in thinking about the scope of the course, the content of individual sessions and process options – in short, for readings that would usefully supplement what is already available and advance my own and others' understanding of current theory and practice. My concluding recommendations relate to these rather different perspectives.

In most course-based provision for professional development, readings play a key role. As implied above, they are a(nother) source of input – and often a stimulus for discussion – for course participants; they are also, obviously, a form of pedagogical support for those attempting to facilitate such courses. Where suitable readings are not available, some committed teacher educator(s) will strive to produce something suitable; where readings are available but not in a convenient form, someone will at some point make an effort to put them together. What may start in these ways as local enterprises – materials to meet the needs of those on the courses one is running – may eventually become books, something that the authors hope will also be of relevance and interest to others. Twenty years ago, in 1990, very little was available in book form: Adrian Doff's *Teach English: A training course for teachers* and Tessa Woodward's *Loop input* had both appeared in 1988 (Doff 1988; Woodward 1988), and Jack Richards and DavidNunan's excellent collection *Second language teacher education* was published in 1990 (Richards & Nunan 1990). Interestingly, given the quantity of work produced since then, three of the books reviewed here (Bailey, Malderez & Wedell and Burns & Richards) explicitly attribute their origins to needs-oriented scenarios; and the remaining two books (Coombe, Al-Hamly, Davidson & Troudi and Wright & Bolitho) implicitly stem from similar motivations. As a group, these books have been selected for review for a number of reasons. They vary in their stated intended readership (levels 1–3), their aims and their coverage. While all seek to represent current practice in rather different ways, only one (Coombe et al.)

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reports (some) original research. One is single-authored, two co-authored and two are edited collections – a consideration which raises such issues as expertise, coherence and breadth; and four different publishers are represented. Wright & Bolitho, a self-published volume, is only available through www.lulu.com.

Each of the books will now be briefly described. This will be followed by a comparative discussion along thematic lines, recommendations and general conclusions.

Overview

Evaluating teacher effectiveness in ESL/EFL contexts, edited by Coombe et al., is innovative in two respects. The editors state that the book has been written 'BY language teachers FOR language teachers, with a view to encouraging readers to look closely at how they, as teachers, are being evaluated and how they are evaluating others' (p. 1). It is also, so far as I know, the first book-length coverage of this theme. A range of contexts is represented. The collection consists of four uneven parts, each of which begins with a brief overview of the papers included in that section. The two papers in Part 1, 'Standards in teacher evaluation', deal with the need for, and development of, standards for teacher assessment and how standards can function as a stimulus to professional self-renewal. Part 2, 'Case studies in evaluating teacher effectiveness', presents six case studies of teacher evaluation and appraisal programmes in both ESL and EFL contexts, with papers based on work in North America, Dubai, China and Hong Kong. Part 3, 'Research in teacher evaluation', offers further instances of approaches to the evaluation of teacher effectiveness in Australia, Japan, Turkey and Dubai, but also exemplifies a number of research methods used to shed light on this and the perspectives of stakeholders. Part 4, 'Tools for evaluating teacher effectiveness', with contributions based on research and experience in the UK, USA and the United Arab Emirates, offers descriptions of recorded 'self-talk' as a strategy for arriving at self-awareness and self-evaluation, a 'diversity-responsive' standards-based assessment tool, and teacher portfolios as an input to formative evaluation. Each paper ends with a set of discussion questions and references, and there is an author/subject index. Seen as a totality, the volume considers the evaluation of teachers at different stages of their careers – pre-service, novice, in-service (the bulk of the papers), in different contexts and, to a lesser extent, at different levels of educational systems. No indication is given as to whether the papers originated in a conference, but – compared to the Burns & Richards collection – I have the impression of editors having to work with what they were given rather than specifying exactly what they wanted. As a consequence, there is variability in the quality of the individual papers and, even allowing for contextual variation, a narrower range of focus across the volume as a whole than I was expecting (e.g. issues such as who should observe teachers and how peer observation can be organised receive only passing mention). As a whole, however, the collection raises interesting questions concerning standards (e.g. how to define effectiveness – what is to be assessed? – a question which is taken up in other volumes reviewed; and the role of context in determining standards), the relationship between formative and summative evaluation, and particularly the means by which effectiveness can be established (which includes issues such as who should be involved in assessment, and the weight that should be attached to student evaluations of teachers/teaching).

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Malderez & Wedell's *Teaching teachers: Processes and practices* is also innovative in that its primary intended readership is the novice teacher educator, 'teachers who are about to adopt or have recently adopted a further role: that of supporting the learning of other future or current teachers' (p. xi) of any subject. In line with their use of the term 'support', the authors take an inclusive view of the work of what they term teachers of teachers (ToTs), who might be involved in, for instance, school-based staff development, the mentoring of trainees, teaching university-based elements of an initial teacher education programme or delivering workshops or components on in-service programmes. The book consists of 12 chapters, evenly divided into four parts. Each part begins with a brief introduction and ends with references and annotated suggestions for further reading. Part 1, 'Preparing yourself', focuses on teacher learning, as a basis for what is to follow in subsequent parts of the book. It outlines different goals for teacher education, discusses conditions for teacher learning and, in relation to the knowledge base of teacher education, distinguishes among knowing about, knowing how, and what the authors refer to as 'knowing to' (p. 24; i.e. being able to integrate and apply what one knows). It concludes with a discussion of ways of thinking and, following Claxton (1997), '"modes" of mind' (p. 31) as a theoretical basis for a five-step planning process which starts with a concrete experience, previous or provided on the course, and proceeds through interpreting, explaining and comparing to a planning/application stage. Part 2, 'Developing programmes that support learning', offers practical advice on general aspects of course design for groups (e.g. needs analysis, formulation of aims) and concrete preparation (e.g. session planning, preparation of handouts). The final chapter deals specifically with one-to-one support in the form of mentoring. Part 3, 'Developing as a teacher of teachers', provides a number of suggestions for ways in which teacher educators can work together to develop themselves, and a brief final chapter is concerned with managing one's development alone. Part 4, 'Assessment and evaluation', covers the assessment of teachers, programme evaluation, and self-evaluation. An index combines entries for authors and concepts referred to in the book. The neatness of organisation is perhaps seductive, however, in that the careful packaging may give the impression of comprehensiveness. I cannot help feeling that an additional part ought to have been allocated to consideration of method in the context of course design: specifically, how language awareness and language skills can be developed, and how opportunities for observation and practice (e.g. microteaching and the practicum) can be organised.

The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education, edited by Burns & Richards, comprises 30 relatively brief (6–7 pages) specially-written papers authored or co-authored by internationally well-known teacher educators. The title of the volume and its stated aim, to offer 'a state-of-the-art survey of current issues, debates, and approaches in contemporary SLTE' (p. vii), inevitably invite comparison with the Richards & Nunan volume cited earlier, which promised 'a state-of-the-art account of approaches to second language teacher education and a source book for those designing programs and activities' (Richards & Nunan 1990: xi). One key difference, however, lies in the fact that the Burns & Richards volume was inspired by the editors' perceived need for suitable readings for a doctoral programme in applied linguistics, an indicator of the increasing maturity of the field. Given space limitations, only a brief summary of the content is possible, and this will therefore highlight key differences

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between the content of the two volumes as an illustration of the advances that have been made in the last two decades. On a broad level, what is immediately noticeable is that topics which occupied whole sections in Richards & Nunan ('The practicum' and 'Supervision') are here dealt with in single papers (by Jerry Gebhard and Kathleen Bailey, respectively, both of whom featured in the earlier volume). Action research and reflective practice still have a place, but there is less on method and activity. The knowledge base receives more attention; there is much more on professionalism – the title of a section containing six papers; a section on 'Identity, cognition and experience' and papers on mentoring and collaborative teacher development (the latter topics also addressed in Malderez & Wedell) highlight the increased importance attached to teacher learning and stimuli to this; and 'Contexts for second language teacher education' acknowledges that teacher learning may be either school-based or delivered by distance learning and facilitated by technology, as well as based on the course room. On a more specific level, the changes that have taken place in the intervening period can be seen in the introductory papers by Donald Freeman on the scope of second language teacher education, and Karen Johnson on trends in second language teacher education, which chart what the editors term 'The landscape of second language teacher education'. Each chapter ends with a limited number of suggestions for further reading and a list of references. There is an author index and a subject index. With 30 papers, as compared to the 19 in Richards & Nunan (1990), the range is wide, but this has had a knock-on effect on the length of the papers. One might also question whether the one-size-fits-all approach to the individual papers is appropriate: are all topics really deserving of the same amount of space? While coverage within sections is predictable up to a point (e.g. that on the knowledge base contains papers on the curriculum of SLTE, knowledge about language and SLA), one might wonder why the only other paper in this section is on discourse conventions. Similarly, the section on teacher development through research and practice, with only three papers, seems rather thin.

Bailey's *Language teacher supervision* combines personal experience, literature review and case studies to offer detailed coverage of a key element of the work of many teacher educators. The author states that the volume is intended for those who might take on supervisory duties as well as those already fulfilling this role. The 15 chapters fall into a number of natural groupings. The introductory chapter outlines the roles and skills of supervisors, and the next two chapters establish a theoretical foundation for what is to follow: chapter 2 highlights the importance of attitudes and awareness, and chapter 3 deals with power relations (autonomy and authority). Chapters 4–6 then relate to observation, including data collection methods; chapters 7–8 focus on the post-observation meeting between teacher and supervisor from the perspectives of procedures and the language used; chapters 9–10 discuss the evaluation of teachers and criteria for this purpose – a focus, as already noted, of Coombe et al. and papers in the Burns & Richards volume; and chapters 11–14 helpfully distinguish between the supervision of pre-service teachers, teaching assistants, in-service teachers, and non-native-[English]-speaking teachers (with consideration of language proficiency standards). Finally, chapter 15, as befits the title 'Professionalism, paradigm shifts, and language teacher supervision', takes a broader look at supervision and alternatives to this, and draws conclusions concerning the characteristics of excellence in supervision. Each

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chapter contains 'cases' for analysis/discussion and ends with tasks/discussion questions and suggestions for further reading. The book contains a complete list of references, an author index and a subject index. Comprehensive though the book seems at first glance, readers with particular needs may perceive certain gaps. I felt that the discussion in chapter 9 of external inspectors and institution-based supervisors (e.g. Heads of Department and Directors of Studies) was very limited, and – though mentoring is discussed – missed any reference to the relationship between a university supervisor and a school-based mentor, both of whom may have responsibility for a trainee during a practicum.

Wright & Bolitho's *Trainer development* is narrowly focused in both content and (implicit) intended readership. An outcome of the MA in Trainer Development at the University College of Plymouth, Marjon, UK, and other, shorter courses run by the authors, and offered as 'a sharing of practice' (p. 1), the book is in essence a detailed, illustrated account of how the authors have worked as TRAINERS of language teacher educators and what beliefs and principles guide the approach they describe, together with their reflections on their own learning. Chapter 1, the first of two 'book-end' chapters on 'Inside a training course', establishes the basic principles that are exemplified in subsequent chapters; and chapter 2 describes the four-phase cyclical approach, based on Kolb (1984), which the authors have adopted to the sequencing of activities within sessions and courses. The cycle, which is not dissimilar to that described in Malderez & Wedell, encompasses an initial focus on previous or shared experience, reflection on this, 'making meaning' (exploring ideas, with guidance and, typically, new input from trainers), and planning for action (which may lead to a product). Chapter 3, the final chapter within what might be seen as the introductory section of the book, discusses strategies for working with groups (forming, managing, disbanding), power distance (cf. Bailey, chapter 3), and considers issues such as conflict within groups. Chapters 4–9 then exemplify the authors' strategies for each of the phases outlined earlier, with some of the phases spanning more than one chapter. Thus, chapters 4 and 5 deal with 'Working with participants' experience' and 'Working with shared experiences in training', and the importance of talk as a way of exploring ideas and making meaning is highlighted in chapter 7, 'Talk in training courses'. In chapter 10, the scope of the discussion widens to consideration of 'Feedback, assessment and evaluation in training' with reference to feedback to participants and the elicitation of feedback from participants as an input to course evaluation. Chapter 11, the penultimate chapter, takes the reader inside a second training course and makes links back to topics discussed in the earlier chapters. The book closes with a restatement of the principles that support the authors' work and their reflections on 'Developing as a trainer'. In all this, what comes through is a commitment on the part of the authors to take account of participants' needs and concerns, having helped them to clarify these, and an honest recognition of the human factors and inherent messiness of this process as well as the role of institutional constraints. Sources referred to are listed at the end of each chapter and a roughly categorised and annotated list of recommended resources is included at the end of the book. These external references apart, the book makes no attempt to situate the approach described within the wider literature on teacher education or to consider how it might be adapted to other levels of teacher education or contexts. It is assumed – rightly in my view – that readers are intelligent and self-motivated enough to do this work for themselves.

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Common themes

Despite the obvious differences, a number of common themes run across these books. Given space constraints, the selection may appear somewhat arbitrary, but it reflects my own view of important shifts that have taken place in SLTE, a view confirmed to some extent by the papers by Johnson and Freeman in the Burns & Richards collection.

Content of language teacher education programmes

Agreement on what has come to be known as the knowledge base of (SL)TE is important for two reasons: because this should be the key consideration in decisions concerning programme content (which will, of course, ultimately be determined by contextual and participant factors), and because, logically, it should also define the scope and criteria for assessment of teachers. In the not too distant past, the knowledge base was seen in terms of knowledge (most simply, about the language and teaching techniques) and skills (the ability to apply this knowledge). The extent to which this has changed and been elaborated can be seen in, for example, Freeman's paper in the Burns & Richards volume and the examples of teacher evaluation standards in several papers in the Coombe et al. collection. The implications for curriculum design are discussed in Kathleen Graves's paper in Burns & Richards. One particular strand within the enlarged knowledge base, concerned to equip the learner with attitudes and skills to learn beyond the course, i.e. the basis of professional autonomy, also reflects a shift in views of the teacher's role and responsibilities (see section 'Self-development and professionalism' below), a shift paralleled in the role of the teacher educator, from 'theory-transmission' to 'investigation–articulation' (Malderez & Wedell, pp. 38–39).

Teacher learning and method in language teacher education

One strand of research in general education and more recently in SLTE relates to teacher cognition and teacher expertise. This and research into how teachers learn and can be helped to learn (e.g. through school-based experience, mentoring, supervision, reflection) is the focus of a number of papers in the Burns & Richards collection. Teacher learning and its facilitation is also a central focus of the first part of Malderez & Wedell, and a running theme in Wright & Bolitho. Both of the latter books set out and exemplify process-based models. In pre-service teacher education programmes, and in less formal institution-based teacher development, learning may also take place as a result of reflection following feedback of some kind. Bailey offers detailed guidance on strategies for supervising in different contexts, and several of the papers in Coombe et al. discuss the potential for formative feedback and self-evaluation within teacher evaluation systems.

Evaluation of teachers – formative and summative

The assessment of teachers is likely to be one of the roles performed by teacher educators and one which – where outcomes are high-stake, e.g. certification, contract renewal – is potentially

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a cause of some anxiety on the part of both the assessor and the assessed. Recognising this, Malderez & Wedell devote the final part of their book to assessment and evaluation, distinguishing clearly between assessment as assessment of teachers and evaluation as a broader concept embracing programme evaluation – within which teacher assessment may be one element – and self-evaluation. Their detailed discussion of assessment includes the development of assessment criteria, which are related to their earlier discussion of course aims and types of knowledge. Institutionally-based evaluation of teacher effectiveness for the purpose of quality assurance (accountability) and/or as a way of promoting teacher development may be very different in certain respects from the assessment of teachers on a pre-service course, but key issues such as the criteria for assessment, who is to carry out the assessment, and what methods are to be used are equally relevant. Several of the papers in both Burns & Richards and Coombe et al. discuss standards (or competences). Those in the latter volume provide helpfully detailed descriptions of methods (e.g. teacher portfolios, observation) that have been used. The consensus is that multiple measures provide a much fairer basis for assessment. Bailey and Wright & Bolitho also each devote a chapter to evaluation. Bailey discusses evaluative criteria, the difficulty of defining effective teaching, and some of the factors influencing this; Wright & Bolitho describe their approach to feedback, assessment and evaluation on their courses, and touch on the tension that can arise when teacher educators have to switch roles from provider of formative feedback to maker of summative judgements.

Self-development and professionalism

Writers concerned with all levels of the stack are in no doubt that teacher educators should model the kinds of behaviour expected of those they are working with by taking self-directed action to develop themselves. Malderez & Wedell devote three chapters of their book to advice on how this might be done (in a self-help group, in classroom settings, and on one's own). Johnston's paper in the Burns & Richards volume deals with collaborative teacher development, and the final section of the same collection contains papers on classroom research methods and topics, action research and reflective practice. The last chapters of both Bailey and Wright & Bolitho take up the same theme: Wright & Bolitho reflect on their own learning, and Bailey relates supervision to teacher professionalism.

Summative comments and recommendations

MALDEREZ & WEDELL. Of the five books reviewed, this is the most obviously suitable for the MA module for novice teacher educators that I am planning (i.e. level 2 in the stack) and would have broad relevance to teacher educators in areas other than TESOL. It takes little for granted, either in terms of prior experience or background knowledge, and its direct address and use of stories to engage the reader will, I am sure, appeal. I plan to make use of most of the book, but see the chapters on teacher learning, programme design and assessing teachers as particularly relevant. These will be set as preparatory reading and

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discussed in class; and other chapters on session planning and preparing materials will be suggested as supplementary material. Part 3, on developing as a teacher educator, the chapter on mentoring, and the final sections of the book on self-evaluation will be referred to and recommended for further reading in the course of my final session.

COOMBE ET AL. To present these papers as 'written by language teachers for language teachers and administrators' (back cover) is perhaps to undersell the potential value of the collection. My own view is that the issues addressed have relevance to anyone at levels 1 or 2 with a practical involvement or interest in teacher appraisal. That said, I feel there is undue weighting in the direction of institutional systems for evaluating teacher effectiveness as part of course provision and that a more even balance between descriptive case study and research might have been preferable. Individual interests and circumstances will to some extent dictate what readers find valuable, but there is scope for choice in the range of contexts and research methods discussed. The more interesting of the discussion questions provided by the writers of each paper invite readers to think of implications/applications in their own context. For my MA module, I will be recommending the research-based papers by Deniz Eken and Peter Davidson, in part because they offer examples of how research can be conducted and presented.

WRIGHT & BOLITHO. The focus of this may be on trainer training (i.e. level 3), but as a detailed description of what was done (content and process) and the rationale for this, the book seems to me to have value for anyone involved in planning for or delivering face-to-face teacher education. The authors have kept reference to other sources to a minimum and many of the activities would be usable on any teacher education course. The book has reinforced my beliefs in the benefits of working collaboratively with one or more like-minded colleagues, the importance of post-session reflection on participant learning, and the need for honest self-evaluation as a prerequisite for professional growth, and given me practical ideas I can use myself. For my module, I will be using the chapters on the authors' cyclical framework for training and on working with groups, dipping into other chapters, and recommending the book as a whole to my novice teacher educators as a key resource for their future work.

BURNS & RICHARDS. A big book, with broad coverage. The back cover blurb states that it is 'an essential resource for teacher educators, teachers, and educational researchers alike', echoing – if rather more forcefully – the view expressed by the editors (p. vii). While a small number of papers might have some relevance for teachers, especially if they were working collaboratively on research projects with teacher educators, in general the style adopted and background knowledge assumed make the volume much more suitable for experienced teacher educators (level 2) in the context of a taught doctoral programme, for those undertaking independent research – for whom the more narrowly focused papers offer useful and accessibly brief introductions to a more extensive literature, and for trainer trainers, such as myself, seeking updating (level 3). I liked the fact that the papers were written to a standard (and for me) logical format and found much to interest me personally. For my MA module, however, I will be making only selective recommendations for further reading.

BAILEY. Excellent coverage of an important topic, but its very size may make this a rather daunting volume for the lone reader. While individual teacher educators with an appropriate

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academic background and some experience of supervision would certainly benefit from the book, its origin in graduate seminars taught by the author and its textbook format, each chapter starting with a case for analysis and ending with a further case and tasks and questions for discussion, make it eminently suitable as a stimulus for the exchange of views on content and the sharing of experiences among those either in a collaborative self-help group or in the context of a formal programme for teacher educators. The chapters on issues in observing teachers and on data collection procedures have value for anyone pursuing this kind of research, and the chapter on the microanalysis of supervisory discourse offers a linguistically-based approach to self-evaluation that many supervisors might find helpful. For me, the volume would be suitable (with the above provisos) for readers at levels 2 and 3 in the stack. I will be drawing on the book for my own inputs to the MA module and recommending it to course participants as a useful resource for their future work.

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