



Symbiosis: The Curriculum and The Classroom

Book Review by Natalie Gunn

I saw Kat Howard present on the limitations of teacher modelling at an educational conference two years ago and have been a fan of hers ever since. She speaks incredibly logically and pragmatically about teaching and learning and she offers up suggestions and strategies, as well as posing thoughts about teaching and learning that I think are important to consider. In her book 'Symbiosis', Kat and Claire Hill discuss how curriculum should be at the forefront of all of our teaching and it should be something that we all take a collective ownership over and not just designated curriculum leads.

I'd previously read a brilliant blog by Kat where she said that the curriculum is 'like a wild animal' that constantly needs to be controlled and 'tamed' and this really made me reflect on my practice. I have often thought about the curriculum as something that needs to 'finished' or 'completed' but actually it needs to be viewed as something that is ever evolving and malleable-this was difficult to accept at first as it means that there is constant work to be done but now I think of it as exciting and a continuous challenge!

In Symbiosis Kat focuses on the idea that the curriculum should privilege 'the process' and not 'the products' and she quotes Mary Myatt by saying that 'materials should privilege thinking over task completion.' This made me think and reflect again! We have spent so long in English ensuring that our schemes of learning are immaculately resourced and effectively challenging but are we ensuring that we focus enough on the thinking that we want our students to do? We have the tools there but are they more planned around process rather than product?

This is the reason I love to read educational literature-I am able to constantly reflect on my practice and improve my teaching and thinking as a result. Sometimes the amount of books around teaching and learning out there can be quite overwhelming and it can be difficult to know where to start... I would strongly recommend this book as a starting point though as it is useful, and designed, for us all!

