

Preface for teacher educators and professional learning leaders

This book is designed as a resource that enriches pre-service teacher education and in-service professional learning – helping teachers to critically question and evaluate the reasons for using technology. It is important to note that this book, while adopting a critical perspective of digital technologies, believes that such technologies can benefit education. However, rather than focusing on what buttons to press, each chapter aims to empower the reader to understand why they should (or should not) use digital technologies, when it is appropriate (or not), and what new implications arise.

In the context of teacher education the text is equally applicable for university subjects that have a discrete focus on digital technologies, as well as subjects that deal with digital technologies in an integrated fashion. The authors of the chapters are notable figures from across a broad range of Australian universities, giving the text a uniquely strong relevance to Australian education. It directly engages with policy, curriculum and other issues particularly relevant in an Australian context. This text provides a resource that assists specialist and non-specialist teacher educators (lecturers and tutors) to incorporate suitable discussion and activity into classes to ensure students engage with many of the key critical issues and debates.

There are approximately 50 000 pre-service teachers in Australia. Many of them are exposed to digital technologies in their courses at a *functional* level (for instance, using technologies such as PowerPoint or blogs in lessons) with relatively little exposure to the big questions about if, when and why digital technologies should be used. The national Teaching Teachers for the Future project revealed that most universities in Australia are struggling to not only embed the use of ICTs in pre-service programs but to also provide all students with the opportunity to engage with the critical issues and their consequences (see Finger et al., 2015; Romeo, Lloyd & Downes, 2012).

In the context of in-service professional learning, the text is designed for general, specialist and leading teachers. The issues and questions, presented by leading experts, reveal the complexity and often hidden implications of our constant struggle in using digital technologies in the classroom. This text is relevant for teachers of early childhood students through to senior years, in all subject areas and domains.

The text is made up of short chapters, designed to concisely broker key issues and questions for teachers to inform their practice. In each chapter, one or more 'critical question' is asked. These are the kinds of questions that we believe all teachers should be asking themselves. Often there is no simple or clear answer to them. However, by asking them we are encouraging a critical perspective in the selection and use of digital technologies. Each chapter explores the complexity of the topic, thereby helping us to understand why we need to ask these questions. It may seem strange to pose such complex and sometimes irresolvable questions in a book designed for non-specialist and pre-service teachers. However, these kinds of questions are rarely dealt with despite their significant implications for all teachers and their students. Understanding that they exist is an essential beginning point for any teacher seeking to use digital technology in their classroom.

Each chapter also contains suggested activities to explore the issues and questions raised. These include discussion scenarios, study questions, observations, analysis prompts and further reading. The text is also supported by a website that contains links and introductory media.

References

- Finger, G., Romeo, G., Lloyd, M., Heck, D., Sweeney, T., Albion, P. & Jamieson-Proctor, R. (2015). Developing graduate TPACK capabilities in initial teacher education programs: insights from the Teaching Teachers for the Future Project. *The Asia Pacific Education Researcher*. Advance online publication doi.10.1007/s40299-014-0226-x
- Romeo, G. I., Lloyd, M. & Downes, T. (2012). Teaching Teachers for the Future (TTF): Building the ICT in education capacity of the next generation of teachers in Australia. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 28(6), 949–964.