

The Essential Guide to Teaching 14-19 Diplomas

By Lynn Senior

The twists and turns of educational policy are, you might think, sufficiently confusing; but when we get to 14-19 it often feels as though, having just passed the examination to become a tourist guide at a maze, it has been replanted overnight to a different design and you not only have to re-do your examination but also to un-learn what you thought were solid facts. The maintenance of professional sanity is not a priority for government as it sets and re-sets policy but without it costly confusion beckons. It is, therefore, good to see that professional educators continue to be capable of generating supportive, sense-making books like this.

The book is one of a series called 'Essential Guides'. This does not mean that it presents itself as the only book that you will ever need; in fact the book constantly draws attention to other books and sources of information. It is brilliantly laid out so that the reader can easily find, for example, definitions, ideas, tips, key ideas, diagrams and explanations. If you have ever been in one of those meetings where everyone else keeps referring to something by its initial letters and you imagine that you are the only one who does not know what they stand for then a surreptitious glance at this book will enable you to get back into the discussion with your professional pride intact. It is a handy size for reading surreptitiously.

In just over 150 pages Lynn Senior has managed to range from some very useful professional advice and explanation to help for those who wish to go deep into, for example, the study of assessment. You don't have to agree with everything in the book. For example, I am not a fan of learning styles because of the tendency to assume that they are a complete answer: they look so attractive; and I believe that badly done coaching and mentoring can cause harm by reinforcing unquestioned orthodoxies; but now that I have Lynn's book I can engage in debate from a deeper and clearer knowledge base; so could any reader.

Do you need to be teaching Diplomas in the sectors covering 14-19 to find this book worth buying? No, you do not. In my view, teachers of any age group and at any level would benefit from having this book on a shelf just behind their desk whenever they are stuck for how to plan a learning activity; or work with colleagues to organise next year; or find a comprehensive set of references to help with writing an assignment for a masters degree.

It costs £16.99 and is published by Longman. To find out more go to www.theessentialguides.net