

**Harland, Tony: University Teaching – An Introductory Guide. London-New York: Routledge. 2012. pp. 136.**

**Reviewed by Judit Torgyik**

Tony Harland is a researcher at the University of New Zealand. He wrote his book based on his own experiences after doing several years' research on pedagogy in higher education. The stated objective of the book is to help the professional socialisation and integration of new lecturers. The book, consisting of ten chapters, can be used in trainings that focus on mentoring and supporting new lecturers. The fact is worth considering that all around the world several university and college professors do not have any kind of teaching qualification, however, they are required to perform high-quality work in education from the very beginning. This objective can be fulfilled through learning to teach and a conscious and continuous reflection on the lecturer's activity.

The book belongs to the group of 'Learning to Teach' books. Although many people believe that research is much more important than teaching, we cannot ignore the fact that people who work in higher education spend just as much time teaching as doing scientific research. Moreover, universities today face a decrease in state support and struggle for students and appropriate recognition. Society is right in demanding high-quality education and students now also have much higher and better-defined demands concerning their lecturers than ever before. Fulfilling these demands requires learning, focussed preparation, and adapting to new challenges. The book is thought-provoking for readers who are interested in global problems of today's higher education. The author provides each chapter with a section titled 'Thought for Reflection' that aims to find further answers to the relevant question. The chapters are finished with personal notes from the author's own research that add further information to the topic of the chapter. The book is well-structured and logically organised. It is written in an easy-to-understand and readable language.

Although the book starts out from research done at the University of New Zealand, the questions investigated are just as relevant in other countries of the world, including Hungary. Our social and economic environment has changed a lot during recent years and the place and role of higher education have also been involved in these changes. On a global scale, more and more young people have an opportunity to get a degree, mass education has become everyday reality in higher education, the development of ICT has profoundly changed the methods of presenting and accessing knowledge, also, the lecturer–student relationship has been enriched with new dimensions, and all this has radically changed the tasks of lecturers and universities in the education system. An increasing number of students pay their tuition, sometimes sacrificing significant amounts of money for their

education. It is worth noting that under these circumstances students have increasing demands towards their lecturers, tend to think more pragmatically about their future, and have an increasing tendency to criticise the education they get.

The author is convinced that teachers' skills can be developed and this is a statement we can all agree with. This development is crucial for those lecturers who do not have a teaching qualification. If they cannot develop their skills, they can only do their work – well or badly, it depends – relying on their own experiences at school and remembering their own professors. However, errors that are committed because of lack of professional skills can lead to several negative outcomes. These cause problems in countries and universities that do not pay proper attention to the matters described. And errors must be paid for: this is shown in bad classroom atmosphere, high stress levels, badly structured lectures, mental health problems, student dissatisfaction and both dropout teachers and students. Although the illusion of 'anyone can teach' still remains with us, it is easy to see that the development, learning, and self-reflection of teachers are inevitable, both from the point of view of the lecturer and that of society.

The book gives advice and practical tips to aid this learning process. New academics may find peer review which involves observing and reflecting on each other's activities. The author describes the process and steps of peer review, starting from choosing the right person and talking over the roles and objectives to the actual process of observation and making a fair feedback. He gives tips and reliable practical advice to help adequate implementation. He stresses that peer review is not equivalent to criticising others. It is, rather, the joint work of two fellow lecturers wishing to learn from each other and develop each other. This work must be based on mutual trust and help, and involve a thorough and mutual discussion of each other's teaching thus developing their personalities and their professional skills as lecturers.

The author also investigates the concept of 'lecture' as one of the predominant teaching methods used in higher education. Besides emphasising the role of lectures in university life, he gives many useful pieces of advice about how to make successful lectures. He also discusses the different aspects of using PowerPoint presentations and the structuring of lectures based on the latest research findings of psychology.

He then goes on to promote 'discussion' as one of the most important forms of learning. The author stresses that it is just as important to teach students how to discuss things and make arguments as for new academics to learn how to conduct a discussion. It is important to see that being an intellectual involves being capable of critical thinking and lecturers can foster this. In the next chapter Harland directs our

attention to theories of learning; here, he puts strong emphasis on discussing the theory of constructivism.

In the chapter titled ‘Students past and present’ the author analyses changing student roles and the sophisticated background to this phenomenon. He points out that students paying a fee for their studies or ones taking a study loan see their contribution much more as an investment than previous generations of students. They want useful knowledge so that their investment pays off.

After all this, the author gives a picture of scientific research. New academics often have to cope with being overburdened, and they need effective time management skills to be able to find time for lecturing and research at the same time. New academics have a tendency to neglect scientific research, however, research is a prerequisite for lecturing just as research is linked with publishing the findings. To help the new lecturer find their place in the institution, the head of department and other colleagues must offer their personal support. A supportive atmosphere and helpful conversations are efficient ways of solving initial problems, while their lack can lead to the lecturer dropping out of his job.

The book also directs attention to the fact that new academics need to think about what the objectives and tasks of higher education are. The author posed this question to both students and new lecturers. For new lecturers it was sometimes hard to find an answer, mainly because of the lack of practical experience. Still, self-reflection can bring us closer to the answer. Although it is sometimes more elusive, it is worth noting the role of higher education in making a better society and developing economy. University lecturers do not only impart knowledge and skills, form attitudes, but they are also responsible to society itself. Harland calls our attention to the fact that university teaching is “the critic and conscience of society” (p. 110) and in this respect lecturers and institutions also have ethical and moral tasks. Maintaining and developing a democratic society requires intellectuals who think and ask questions. This is manifested in teaching and practising critical thinking. Finally, Harland gives us a model of critical thinking. His final conclusion is that the ability to reason and being critical is one of the most important objectives of university education.

The book gives useful advice to new lecturers. It is just as useful for them as for readers interested in questions of pedagogy in higher education. What the book has to say is also worth considering in the international higher education community.