Teaching Post Covid: Siezing Opportunities for Change

FOREWARD BY JONATHAN GLAZZARD

The chapters of this book present research from across a wide range of global contexts and this is one of the book's key strengths, along with several others. Each chapter is well-written using an accessible writing style. The authors have taken great care to theorize the content of their chapters and rather than presenting the Covid-19 pandemic as a tragic event, there is a strong uplifting feel to the book. The book strongly focuses on reimagining education in a post-pandemic world. Although the authors present the adverse effects of the pandemic, there is a strong emphasis on what we have learned from educators' responses to it and the implications of this professional learning for teaching, leadership, and teacher development.

I found myself becoming absorbed in the narratives of the participants in the various research projects. The participant quotes and reflections demonstrated not only the adverse impacts of the pandemic, but the empowering effects of it. Some key cross-cutting themes emerge from the chapters. These include, but are not limited to, the following: the need for bold and empathetic leadership; the need to involve teachers in the process of change and share power with students (see Chapter 13); the need for teacher education to emphasise the core principles of teaching (see Chapter 12) and the need for flexible ways of working and teaching. A consistent approach to the presentation of chapters supported me to navigate the book and the final chapter presents an effective synthesis of the key messages from across all chapters.

The book is an important contribution to knowledge. The first chapter sets out the educational context clearly. Education continues to operate within a quasi-market which has resulted in the prioritisation of commercialisation, an evidence-based discourse which privileges large-scale quantitative research and inequalities in the workforce. Prescriptive frameworks and the emphasis on datafication have resulted in increased burnout and high rates of teacher attrition. One of the strengths of this book is how it privileges the voices of teachers, teacher educators and parent-teachers. The research studies that are presented in the chapters are largely qualitative (although not exclusively) and the findings are interesting, rich and have transferability. It is strikingly clear from reading the book that the impacts of the global Covid-19 pandemic were common across the different global contexts that the chapters explore. One theme which strongly emerged was that educators developed flexibility and demonstrated resilience as they negotiated their professional and personal responsibilities.

In chapter 2, on part-time women teachers, Brown calls for more bold and empathetic leadership to support women teachers who need to work flexibility to

balance their professional and personal commitments. Chapter 10 argues the need for social justice leadership across education and the identification of these approaches to leadership invites further research into the principles and practices associated with these types of leadership. Similar themes also emerge in Chapter 3, although this chapter explores the needs of student-teacher mothers in higher education. Higher education has given insufficient attention to the needs of this group of students, and the pandemic highlighted the challenges they faced more acutely perhaps than previously. Again, similar themes emerge in Chapter 4 which explores teachers' experiences of teaching during the menopause.

The pandemic demonstrated how teachers needed to return to the core essentials of teaching. These include a pedagogy of care which gives priority to children's holistic development. In Chapter 5 the authors illustrate how this gave teachers a new sense of determination to remain in the profession and Chapter 8 also draws out the link between a pedagogy of care and student and teacher wellbeing. Chapters 7 and 9 explore the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for early childhood teachers and leaders. They call for improved recognition and status given to the early childhood education sector and Chapter 7 makes several recommendations which will improve the working conditions of early childhood educators.

The pandemic made it necessary for educators across all sectors of education to work more creatively and Chapter 6 calls for academic teachers working within higher education contexts to acknowledge their creativity and resilience. I thoroughly enjoyed the style of writing in Chapter 11. It was accessible, personal and took the reader through a professional journey of curriculum development. Key messages that are emphasised in the book are that disruption can present opportunities for innovation and change (see Chapter 15) and that the traditional classroom can be reimagined from being a physical and bounded space to allow official and unofficial teaching spaces to co-exist (see Chapter 14). The benefit of online learning presents new and exiting learning opportunities (see Chapter 16) and the pandemic provides an opportunity to pause, reflect and think differently about education.

The final chapter presents several calls for action, notably the need to develop and nurture teachers' professional autonomy and to cultivate cultures of care and empathy. Within a neoliberal marketized education system, these priorities have been arguably disregarded in recent years. In many countries, education policies have emphasised a culture of competition and high academic achievement has been used as a proxy of a successful education system. At the same time, we have witnessed, globally, high rates of teacher attrition, poor teacher mental health, low job satisfaction and burnout. Prescriptive policy frameworks have reduced teachers' professional autonomy and the emphasis on a knowledge-based curriculum in some countries has reduced opportunities for rich, meaningful and memorable learning experiences. This book is both uplifting and empowering. It provides educators with an opportunity to return to the core principles of teaching and it calls for the voices of teachers to be prominent in key policy decisions. The pandemic demonstrated

that teachers were resilient and adaptable agents of change. They focused on a pedagogy of care and relationships between schools and communities were strengthened. Teachers were trusted to make judgements about the achievement of their students rather than students being subjected to high-stakes examinations. This book calls for the education sector to pause, reflect and consider what was learned during the pandemic and nudges policy makers, school leaders and teachers to think differently, rather than returning to an education system that reflects pre-pandemic times. It is an excellent piece of scholarship which privileges the voices of practitioners from across the globe. I commend the authors and the editors for producing a text which makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge.