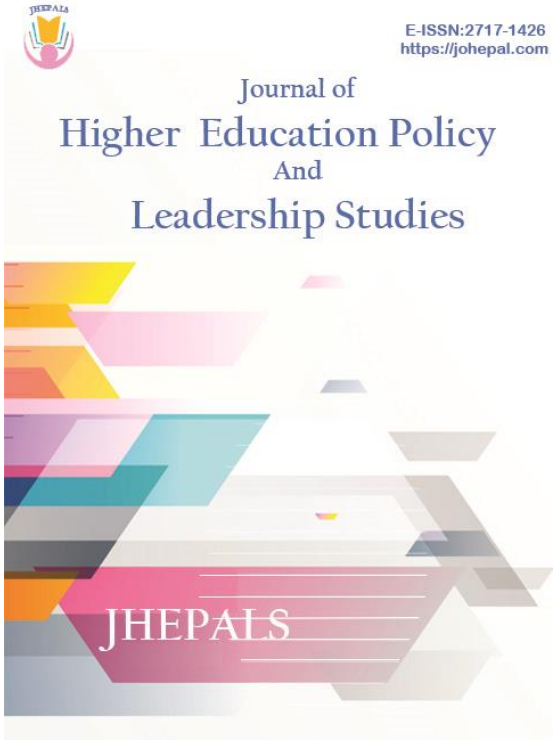
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Book Review: **What They Didn't Teach Me on My PGCE and Other Routes into Teaching**

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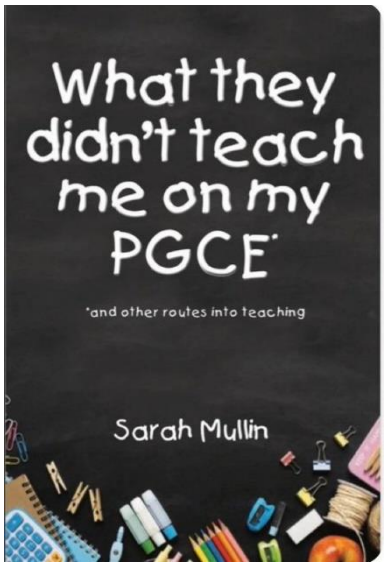
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What They Didn't Teach Me on My PGCE and Other Routes into Teaching

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Lynne McKenna *

When asked to provide a review for a book with a title ***'What they didn't teach me on my PGCE',*** one might be forgiven for having misgivings. Having spent over thirty- four years working in education, firstly as a teacher and subsequently twenty- two years as a leader in Higher Education Institutions, in the area of initial teacher education and the professional development of teachers, I am a strong advocate for the teacher education sector. To review and indeed celebrate a book with a title that wryly suggests that my life's work has not quite achieved its aim, certainly got my attention. However, the publication of this book and indeed its very clever title, actually supports the widely held view that qualifying as a teacher should not be considered as the end of the journey; rather, it needs to be thought of as the beginning of a career which has continuous professional development and development of professional practice at its very core. This book celebrates the joy of teaching, shares the power and experiences of making connections, engaging with children, parents,

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communities and fellow professionals and supports the aims of making a difference and having an impact on children's education, development and lives. This is what teaching is all about!

The premise of the book is quite simple; a collection of over 200 narratives written by teachers for teachers, and as such, this book successfully contributes to the practitioner literature around initial teacher education and continuous professional development. However, this book does more than simply offer 'stories' from the teaching profession. It makes a welcome contribution to higher education policy and leadership at a time when many teacher education providers have struggled to continue to operate. Teacher education operates in a difficult landscape, a landscape where applications to teacher training have been declining, where the constraints of the DfE's Recruitment and Retention Strategy limit creative and innovative solutions to the teacher shortage crisis and where public confidence and respect for the teaching profession is diminished. Added to this, the reticence of some schools to support placement activity, as the threat of impending Ofsted inspections presents a challenge around capacity to support training and education of student teachers. This has contributed to the myriad of uncertainties around providing Initial Teacher Education within the higher education sector. In recent years, the sector itself has witnessed the emergence of several barriers which have contributed to the uncertainty of the future of the place of Initial Teacher Education in universities. An emphasis on the polarisation of school led provision and Higher Education Institution provision, controlled recruitment methodologies, and increased competition for applicants between initial teacher education providers have been some of the challenges faced. This has been an unprecedented time for University Senior Management teams with some universities making the difficult decision to cease offering this provision. Where this provision has been retained, subjects and cohort sizes have often been reduced as the DfE allocations methodology has consistently failed to achieve its targets. For those universities who held their nerve at this time, this was indeed a challenging time. As a senior leader in an HEI, committed to celebrating and raising the profile of the teaching profession, my imperative also included helping to raise the profile of the teacher education provider sector. The responsibility to provide the next generation of outstanding teachers became a shared endeavour. Working in partnership with our schools, mentors and university teacher educators to create initial teacher education provision which would meet the needs of our local, regional, national and international partners subsequently expanded our provision at a time of national decline.

Of course, the Covid-19 pandemic has presented the profession with its own challenges. Teachers, leaders and school support staff across the UK have demonstrated exceptional professionalism during this time. The nation united in a new found respect and admiration for teachers, who very quickly opened schools to provide education and care for key workers, developed and extended the pedagogy of learning and teaching by moving their teaching online, and generally went above and beyond to support children, parents and their communities. We know that one of the key things that helps people feel safe during uncertain times is connection with other people and our schools and teachers are continuing to provide a vital service in helping children and parents feel connected to a wider community. It is my belief, that when the country emerges from the coronavirus lockdown, that this generation of teachers and school leaders will continue to experience new levels of public support and respect. I firmly believe that they will have the power to influence the future of education in ways that really would have been previously inconceivable. In the same way, our student teachers, many of whom are now embarking on their first teaching post are entering the

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profession at a time when teaching will look and feel very different but will be ever more important and viewed with increased respect. The teaching profession, as ever has risen to the challenge, providing selfless public service in these extraordinary times.

It looks likely that 2020 will be the best year for teacher education recruitment since 2013. The 14% increase in Primary applications and a 20% increase in Secondary applications nationally can be considered as a consequence of a weakened labour market where people are applying to be teachers in what is considered to be a safe profession. As applications to teacher education programmes have increased during this time, teacher education providers are seeking new ways to deliver and support the training and education of teachers. This book will offer a valuable resource to add to the toolbox. With the publication of this book, what Sarah has managed to do here is three- fold. Firstly, she has successfully conveyed the message that the reality of entering the teaching profession is a career long commitment to continually developing practice, expertise, skills and knowledge. Secondly, she has, through the narratives, reinforced the idea that teaching is primarily about engagement and the development of relationships and recognises my earlier point that the development of such connections is what teaching is all about. Thirdly, in her celebration and sharing of these 'stories', Sarah has further raised the profile and status of the teaching profession and the teacher education sector.

"What they Didn't Teach me on my PGCE" provides a valuable resource for teachers and student teachers during this time and will enable teachers to *'dip in and out'*, providing practical support and advice. This book captures the joy of teaching and supports the initial teacher education input that teachers have received on their PGCE. These 'stories' will help new and long serving teachers to reflect upon their own practice and in the words of Sarah herself, *"This is illustrative of the very nature of our profession: we are always learning, always growing as professionals and always finding what works for us in our own contexts."*

Professor Lynne Mckenna is Dean of the Faculty of Education and Society, Professor of Education and a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Her professional background is teaching and she has been involved in teacher development in HEI's since 1998. She is a key proponent of the role universities play in teacher education provision, acknowledging that around 62% of initial teacher training students study at a modern university. She is a member of The MillionPlus Deans of Education Network, The All Party Parliamentary Group for the Teaching Profession, The University Council for the Education of Teachers, The Chartered College of Teaching, Schools North East and #WomenEd. She is a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and in 2020, was named as a leader in the field of innovation on the list of #NorthInnovationWomen.

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