

RICHARDS, J. (2017). 50 TIPS FOR TEACHER DEVELOPMENT. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Reviewed by Celine Kearney
Centre for Languages, Wintec

In *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change*, a book of conversations between educationalists Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, one comment rang true, “The more people participate in their own education...the more they develop themselves” (1990, p. 148). This insight is not new given that I have been teaching English as an Additional Language to adults for 30 years, but applying it to myself as a teacher requires focused intention. Taking the time to develop an aspect of teaching or academic practice can be a challenge amongst the welter of tasks: resource development, teaching, assessment, moderation, team and institutional responsibilities, as well as research, writing and supervision.

Whether you are motivated by a personal desire or a professional or institutional requirement, Jack Richards’s book, *50 tips for teacher development*, offers a wealth of advice and suggestions. There are tips for developing teaching practice, and research skills, integrating technology, engaging in critical reflection and extending knowledge of a particular field or interest; there are also suggestions for creating a culture of professional development in a team, acknowledging that this requires the support of the school or the institution. Chapters draw not only on Jack Richards’ considerable experience but on other published articles and books, with references so that interested readers can take their inquiry further. The contents page and index are clear and thorough, and there is cross referencing among some of the tips which enables quick reference.

This book appeals because it is structured using short chapters, each with a stated purpose, and explicit actions, with key points organised through numbers and bullet points. Each chapter is developed in a focused and systematic style, offering easily approachable steps towards developing the skill. I particularly liked the suggestions of using narrative frames to explore teaching, enabling learning about teaching through sharing stories. Richards’ lists of aspects to be aware of, and steps to take, provide a checklist that should engender confidence in the process of stepping out, sometimes into the unknown, to extend or deepen a skill, or to do something completely new.

Richards makes the point early on that we each need to take responsibility for our own professional development. Whether we are novice, mid-career or late-career teachers, he suggests developing a plan to move into the next stage of our development. That resonates with me, having recently been awarded a PhD I now realise the immense benefits, both professionally and personally, of having the time to inquiry deeply into a chosen topic and to be guided and supported in the process.

Tips on sharing knowledge and skills through mentoring colleagues and peer coaching, reminded me of the generosity of many colleagues, whose sharing of ideas and hard-won experience have enabled me to respond to students' needs and to develop my own teaching practice. This collegial engagement is becoming even more valuable as the changes in the education sector in Aotearoa may bring even greater pressures for teams and individuals.

I recommend that you add Richards' book to your pile of 'must read when I have time' texts. If you need to extend an aspect of teaching practice or academic work, or you have a role in teacher development, put it on the top and make sure it's the next book you read.

References

Bell, B., Gaventa, J., & Peters, J. (Eds.) (1990). *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change: Myles Horton and Paulo Freire*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.