

Book Reviews

The manual of AI-mediated autonomous teacher development (book review)

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In a thirty-year career as a teacher of English as a foreign and second language, Nik Peachey set up his own online system for producing weekly lesson plans for teachers, focusing on social issues and addressing areas of language use of special value to language teachers wanting to introduce new topics and activities to their classes at different levels of proficiency. Like many of his colleagues, he has moved beyond the use of the computer and the Internet to produce and circulate lesson plans and now has published an online book on the role of artificial intelligence and its applications, such as ChatGPT, in language learning and teaching. Entitled *The Manual of AI-Mediated Autonomous Teacher Development*, the book is available online. Nik Peachey takes teachers of English through the theory and practice of artificial intelligence in a clear, simple and non-scientific approach which is adaptable to all teachers of foreign and second languages helping them create and develop new teaching materials to interest and involve their students in the learning process. Aimed principally at adult learners, the book is valuable for both teachers and researchers in showing how language teaching has developed from the 'grammar' approach to the 'communication' approach and how artificial intelligence is introducing a new dimension to teaching and learning in a way that is accessible to computer specialists and non-specialists alike.

The book is made up of nine chapters covering a wide range of teaching issues that can occur in the classroom and developing career skills for teachers as well as achieving a deeper understanding of language and language teaching methodology and how to prepare a research paper and even prepare a blog.

Chapter 1 explains how to use the book, while Chapters 2 and 3 focus on teaching skills and developing a good understanding of students' needs and how to deal with their problems. Chapters 4 and 5 examine how to do research and how to write up your results, prepare a conference presentation, develop a blog and plan a teacher development session. Chapters 6 to 9 address issues of professional development dealing with how to develop your career, self-care and mindfulness, planning and productivity and thinking differently.

An interesting feature of the book is how it introduces models taken from management to explain to readers and show how they can use these to their advantage. Chapter 3, for example, introduces the *5Whys* technique. The *5Whys* technique is simply a way of making sure you don't stop at the first answer that comes to mind as the answer to a question but dig down deeper to find out the real reason for the problem. Imagine you become aware of a problem – for example, student disengagement – and want to understand why a student appears not to

want to be involved in the classwork. You ask yourself why. The first answer might be laziness or, as Nik Peachey notes, the topic being taught or practised in the classroom is uninteresting. Instead of accepting your first answer, keep asking 'Why?'. In doing so you'll discover the real reason for the student's disengagement and what you can do about it.

In Chapter 4, the SWOT analysis is a commonly used acronym in business, allowing users to estimate their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in any area of their careers and to exploit their strengths and take advantage of their opportunities while being aware of and able to deal with their weaknesses and threats.

Another acronym used in business and in academia is the SMART analysis, discussed in Chapter 6. SMART is used as a way of deciding your goals and how best to reach them. S stands for Specific. Make your goal clear and precise. M stands for Measurable. What will tell you have succeeded in reaching your goal? A stands for Achievable. Make sure it is realistic and that you can make it happen. R stands for relevant, and T – for Time-bound. This is a very effective tool in personal career development but also for planning the success of possible educational projects like completing a particular course of teaching in the timeframe given and to the standards you aspire to.

The book is full of tasks for readers to try out in practice and each task is divided into three parts. The first task, entitled 'Introduction' and produced with the help of ChatGPT, is a rationale describing the task and how you can benefit from it. Second is a prompt, a sample group of instructions that you can apply to get support from the AI bot. In case you don't know, a bot is a software programme to help you complete certain tasks. So, a chatbot helps you to chat, have a conversation in a language. The third part of the task provides background information on each task and is supplemented by further support materials.

Here's an example from Nik Peachey's *5Whys* technique. He begins by describing what the *5Whys* involves, how it is used in the classroom and the teacher's own life and what the results may be. As he concludes the section, he writes that *'by integrating the 5Whys into your reflective practices you not only become a problem solver but also develop a deeper understanding of your students' needs and motivations. It's a tool that empowers you to turn challenges into opportunities for growth'*.

The next section is the prompt, which is a text you can enter on the AI app to get an answer to your query about how to use the *5Whys* technique. Here's the prompt: *'Please, walk me through the stages of analysing a problem using the 5Whys technique. Do this by asking me for questions and waiting for my response before asking the next question. Once you have gathered all the information you need from me produce a summary to help me understand the problem and how to resolve it'*.

The final section of each task, the 'Origins' section, explores the origin and development of the tool presented. In this task, the *5Whys* technique was introduced by Sakichi Toyoda, the founder of Toyota Industries. The Origins section explains how it contributed to Toyota's international renown and concludes with how using the *5Whys* technique in education has improved skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, and inquiry-based learning. The *5Whys* technique has also become a tool for metacognition, how to examine and manage your thinking. As Nik Peachey sums it up, it helps teachers and students solve academic and classroom problems but also reflect on their learning programmes and decision making.

An excellent guide to the role of AI in language learning and in general education with practical activities that teachers can put into action in class. AI becomes accessible in this beautifully presented, informative, theoretical, practical and, above all, entertaining online book.

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