

the information-delivery bias of the national curriculum in practice amounts to a disenfranchisement of large sectors of the population.

That said, there is a lot useful material in this book. At the heart of it is Patrick O'Connor and Melanie Petch's 'Merleau-Ponty, Writing Groups and the Possibilities of Space' (pp. 75-97), which uses Merleau-Ponty's concept of the 'embodied writer' to analyse how students relate to their writing. To get students (and academics) to see writing as an active rather than a passive activity—think of the classic notion of 'writing-up'; the very last thing one does after the real work of research—they advocate writing groups, where writing is embedded and embodied in a social and dialogic context. If there's one overall thesis in this book—which takes a number of divergent but for the most part complementary approaches—it's this emphasis on writing groups and the mutual support and platform for discussion that they provide.

In particular, Clughen and Matt Connell's 'Using Dialogic Lecture Analysis to Clarify Disciplinary Requirements for Writing' makes the case for the social space of writing and presents a number of strategies and techniques for developing it. This is something that is fairly obvious in the creative writing sector, and is one of the functions of the writing workshop (there are others), but it is good that there is only one brief reference in passing to creative writing in the whole book. There are wider concerns here.

Which is an apt point to return to the mess. There are dozens of little errors in this book, from mistakes in punctuation, to uncoordinated sentences to missing words. Nothing that a decent proofreader wouldn't weed out, but characteristic of the current time-pressured and REF-pressured state of UK academia. Yet so much of this book is about giving students (undergraduate and postgraduate) time to write, not 'write up' or just get things down. It is a book that should not become just another disposable outcome of the academic machine, when so much of what it says provides cogent, often implicit, criticism of the machine itself.

### **Increasing Student Engagement and Retention Using Social Technologies: Facebook, E-portfolios and Other Social Networking Services**

**Laura A. Wankel and Patrick Blessinger**

Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2012)

Review by Lisa Hayes

This book is the seventh volume in a series entitled 'Cutting Edge Technologies in Higher Education' which addresses a variety of social media issues. The book is composed of ten chapters (approximately 300 pages) contributed by a range of authors. The chapters are divided into two parts, the adoption of social media, and the application of social media, and present case studies, surveys and literature reviews to examine how social media technologies are being used to 'improve writing and publishing skills in students, create engaging communities of practice, and how these tools are being used for e-Mentoring and constructing online reputations.'

The book addresses a hot topic in higher education, and does so by presenting a range of different approaches, all claimed by the editor to utilise the spirit of social constructivism –