Differentiation in the classroom was never mentioned – not once – while I was studying for my first teaching qualification in 1994. Fast forward five years, and the concept was on the ascendant; and by the beginning of the new millennium, it was as firmly a part of any given lesson plan as 'expected student numbers' or the words group activity.

Things change. Education changes and students change, and the industry is the richer for this triumph over stagnation: not that everyone is listening, of course, despite the best efforts and pedagogic decibelage of the likes of David Hodgson, who has now nailed his colours to the mast with a volume on the subject.

Sort of.

Engaging and well researched as this book undoubtedly is, it’s a tricky one to review. It is largely made up of quizzes and activities set to nail down (say) the reader’s personality, once and for all (as if this happened to be a much-discussed topic). So it was that as early as page 5, your reviewer found himself psychologically aligned with
David Beckham and Marge Simpson (I kid you not!), and I was told that I gain energy from inside myself and recharge my battery (whatever that really means) by spending time alone.

As it happens, this is perfectly true (if I've understood it correctly) but what's it got to do with education? Moving on through the next quiz I learn that I'm 'imaginative, creative' – that I'm one of the 'dreamers' (such as Cinderella or Doctor Who: 'potential market?' is a question that springs to mind) who takes 'information in by looking at the big picture'.

Once again, true enough; but so what, I couldn't help thinking. If I'm closer to Katie Price than I am to Cheryl Cole (the results of the third quiz), I am happy to be so, as baffled as I might be to detect the difference; but I would have appreciated, by this point, a clue from the author as to where we were going with this.

Where we're going with this, it turns out, is to an exegesis, almost, of the 'perfect teacher'. And it is at this point (early on, page 15) that a wary sneer creeps across the reviewer's face. You see, while we're in a confessional mood, I might as well own up to something else at this point. The problem I have with this book is quite simple: I don't believe in any of this stuff. However engagingly it might have been written, I don't buy it. I'm sorry. It's a personal failing, I am certain. This book might well be of use to many practitioners, but it's not for me, I'm afraid – nor will it be at any point in the near future.

'Types.'

If I'm absolutely honest (and we've come this far, so why not be frank?) I think it's the notion of 'types' that catches in the critical craw. It is not that I don't like it, so much as I don't believe in it. (It's not even that I don't agree with it: it's more that I happen to think it's nonsense.)

The experience leaves the reviewer with a host of conflicts to deal with. Personality in the Classroom is well written... and I didn't want to read it. It is riddled with research... much of which I would take issue with. It's a good book for types unlike mine.