This book is a collection of papers previously published in a special edition of *Research Papers in Education* (vol 26(2) 2011). Since all of the papers are readily accessible through the University’s library it’s not immediately clear why anyone would wish to purchase a hardback version (priced at £85) and most academics interested in this area are likely to have access through their own libraries. The value in such a publication is possibly in the way in which it might summarise work in the field or provide a reader to accompany postgraduate study. However, no attempt has been made to update the cited references (a few of which refer to in press 2011) and the introduction provides a limited review of the literature and largely serves to introduce the articles in the publication. Thus the purpose of the book as a standalone publication is unclear.

Having doubted the value of a separate publication, those with an interest in learning styles, deep and surface processing, and related areas will find interesting material here. The papers demonstrate what a complex and murky area this can be. The evidence that students adopt different approaches to learning (deep, surface, strategic) is strong but the way in which individuals respond is changeable, context dependent and governed by a range of factors. The implications for curriculum designers are not always clear either. Attempts to introduce a curriculum that deliberately fostered a deep approach (through adopting a problem-based learning methodology) did induce some surface learners to adopt a deep approach. However, the change also led to around the same number of previously deep learners to adopt a surface approach.

Chapters challenge the notion that students from some cultures are pre-programmed to adopt a surface approach to learning and explore the effect of assessment and feedback on the ways in which students approach learning. Overall there is much here to stimulate debate about how we structure, deliver and assess our curriculum to meet the needs of our diverse student body – but access the journal, don’t buy the book.