Book title: Building Learning Power

Author: Guy Claxton

Publication date: 2005

1. What is your overall impression of the book?

Claxton's book is a 'how to guide' that uses research and evidence to support his theory of learning power, and how pupils can be taught to be effective learners through their approach to education. The book is set out in an informal way, with diagrams and key research or vocabulary in easily accessible places. It is therefore easy to navigate and find information quickly. I enjoyed reading it, and found it easier to read than other academic books, although this may not be as serious in nature to other academic books I have read.

2. Who do you think would benefit most from reading the book? What will they learn?

Teachers but also university students and anyone who is in a period of learning themselves will benefit from reading this book. It encourages life-long learning, and a growth mindset, so really, this book could be for anyone. The book will help the reader to identify different approaches to improving their learning, without studying harder, but smarter. It enables more efficient learning, and will help to make learning more about the pupils' input and less about the teacher. Teachers will learn how to help their pupils become more resilient; question what they know to make links in their learning; reflect on what they know by becoming a meta-learner; and reach independence.

3. What did you think about the quality of the writing? Please consider the tone, structure and ideas. Does it suit the audience?

The book is structured into four sections, two of which give fictional case studies to contextualise learners or teachers before talking about the learning theory behind them. Within the four sections, the writing is really carefully structured, which also helps to build up your ideas as the reader of this concept. Most of the left-hand pages use diagrams, research or highlight key points, which are useful for finding information, or for looking for specific information.

I chose the book because I was certain it would highlight in detail some of the elements I wanted to use in my essay, and I knew this because of how it is presented, when I was looking for key words in books. Even though this book is a second edition, I still found some grammatical mistakes, which considering this book is about education it made me consider the integrity of the book! The informality does suit the fact that the book is for everyone who is interested in the theory, and wants to apply it.

4. Please discuss the research used to underpin the ideas. What evidence does the author use? Is it robust and up-to-date?

The book is based on a research project: ELLI project at University of Bristol which was undertaken in 2000. It tested Claxton's theory and found positive results, alongside helping the researchers to refine Claxton's original theory. It also references many other researchers in an informal way but not with Harvard referencing. The implications are that the evidence almost seems more anecdotal, and with no bibliography, trying to find the original theorists or researchers will be more difficult in comparison to a traditional academic text. If I cannot find the research for myself, why would I trust the author? The book is also based on his own and others' anecdotal evidence of practice in the profession which is important because the theory was based on real life experience.

5. What did you learn from reading the book? What ideas/approaches/practice will you change or adopt as a result of reading this book?

This book supported some of the ideas I had about my own learning, and I have found that a few of my influential moments in education are mirrored with the experiences highlighted in the book e.g. reflection and resilience. The book also resonated with me because I have been working on my use of questioning, in order to create more independent learners. This type of skill is exactly what I would like to achieve in my classroom and so I will use advice from the book and my mentor to continue to develop this practice. The four main points of action for building learning power within the classroom are: explaining learning power, commentating on learning power, orchestrating learning power and modelling. A lot of these aspects good teachers will already do in their classrooms anyway, so it is something I will be looking to develop.

6. Could you share a quote from the book that particularly resonated with you?

"The skills and dispositions of meta-learning can be cultivated simply by a teacher's persistent use of questions, such as 'How did you go about finding that out?' or 'How would you go about teaching that to other people?' p.35.