

Book title: The Teachers Toolkit. Raise classroom achievement with strategies for every learner.

Author: Paul Ginnis

Publication date: 2002

1. What is your overall impression of the book?

This book seems to be in support of the revolution in teaching that brought about the change in the emphasis of teaching from 'teaching' to 'learning'. The author provides strategies which are supported by a conceptual framework. Links are drawn between the emergence of neurological research and previous insights into cognitive psychology and the social aspects of learning. The book's purpose is to provide a research tool which has a variety of different activities to support learning. Each activity is provided on the basis that it has been tried and tested to help provide a balance between the science of learning and the art of teaching for learning.

The author demonstrates how this book is based on years of the author's experience in teaching and learning. By drawing links to the recent (at the time) scientific research around the brain and how the research affirms and refines earlier practices based on principles of humanistic psychology, holism, cooperation and democracy. This book appears to hope to support the change in teaching practices by presenting thoroughly road tested practical suggestions that have had positive effects on motivation discipline and the quality of learning.

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

This book was given to me by one of my colleagues, a teacher who has been teaching for ten years. Having read the book, it came highly recommended, to support me in my teacher training year. It is theoretical and practical; therefore, it would be really beneficial for trainee teachers, newly qualified teachers and long standing teachers. It not only provides a theoretical framework to inform about the newly developed research regarding the science of learning, it also provides a large quantity of tools for teaching the learning. The activities are widely applicable to many subjects, in particular core subjects. The author provides an outline of the activity, the applications it is most suitable for, what the activity will provide the students with and variations that can be made to the activity. In addition to this there is another section devoted to providing tools for managing group work, behaviour and personal responsibility; this again provides a theoretical framework in addition to plenty of activity ideas.

There are two further sections, the third provides operating tools, which are advised to provide help towards informing and supporting long-term planning, differentiation and the use of assessment in lesson flow to create student led, independent learning teaching environments. The final section of the book provides a guidance section which provides almost a checklist style section that can help you to ensure the practices you are using are working effectively.

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

This book is written in an easily readable way. The language used is colloquial which creates a friendly advisory tone. Each section has an introduction, which introduces the theories and the

research, and the links between scientific evidence and practice. This is then developed further by providing the activities. This reinforces the information discussed in the introductory section. Section 1 is largely based on scientific findings and is written in a way that is easily interpreted and understood. This section is written in an ordered, organised and structured way that is very easy to follow. All sections of the book are written in this way. I feel that the tone of the writing is suited to teachers because it has a friendly yet fact-based tone.

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

The foreword of the book outlines that the author Paul Ginnis has been at the heart of the debate about the role of the teacher and the organisation of classrooms and schools. This is a statement written by John West-Burnham, whom is a professor of educational leadership at the University of Hull. The author has worked for over 22 years in schools as a teacher, head of department, advisory teacher, staff development tutor and a freelance trainer. This wealth of experience is reported to have provided substantial experience of the activities suggested in the book. He also uses relevant research to back up every point that is made.

The book was published in 2002; much of the research was relatively close to this publication year. To answer whether it was robust I feel it's essential to look at the activities suggested. Paul outlines that all the activities are tried and tested numerous times and that any activities that were not successful were not included in the book. Only when the activities are tried and tested by myself will I know the robustness of the application of these activities. However the premise in which they are shared indicates they are robust.

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?

From reading this book I have learnt the scientific underpinnings of learning theories which were first introduced by humanistic psychologist many years ago. This book has also contributed to my attitude and beliefs about lesson planning, and the crucial components that need to be considered carefully. Furthermore, it has provided me with a whole host of activity ideas that I will be implementing moving forward. In addition to this, it has provided some advice on effective differentiation styles that can be used when planning lessons. Also, it has provided useful ideas for creating checklists, so that I can continue to effectively monitor and measure the effectivity of my practices.

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

"We should be as concerned with how we teach as we traditionally have been concerned with what we teach." This is a quote from John Bruer, schools for thought and is found on the 2nd page in the book. I think this is a profound statement that defines the whole attitude of the book.