



Learning to Learn: International Perspectives from Theory and Practice

Crick, Ruth Deakin; Stringher, Cristina; and Ren, Kai, eds.
Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014

Book Review

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“Learning to learn” is a strong and appellative concept for people involved and interested in education. The book’s title suggests a continuous search for an appropriate and practical understanding of the meaning of “learning to learn,” and its significance in the practice at various levels. “Learning to learn” is viewed as a holistic and dynamic concept that encompasses relationships with learning, reasoning, knowledge, consciousness, critical thinking, working memory, education self-awareness, motivation, lifelong learning, life-wide learning, inference, systems of thinking, spiritual matters, social heritages, cultural contexts, and “natural learning” as an ordinary activity with others. The concept is also related to fields of knowledge such as education, psychology, sociology, and so forth, and it is presented as a paradigm in continuous construction.

This book is strategically divided in two main parts; (1) theory and (2) international research and practices. Seeking for a comprehensive view of education, the first part engages the reader in the concept of “learning to learn” from a theoretical and philosophical perspective, bringing together an extensive list of definitions, visualizations, and considerations related to the subject. The second part offers research based on nine case studies showing how “learning to learn” works in the practical arena in schools, curriculums, educational policies, and teachers’ pedagogical practices. However, even though the book does not deal directly with specific pedagogical strategies in the classroom, the discussion offers good insights and approaches that can enhance the practice of teaching. This aspect is further advanced by the authors’ emphases in explaining the methodologies used in the research.

“As an organizing concept in education. . . learning to learn” not only deals with scientific matters concerning learning, but also with curriculum, pedagogy, and educational policies

within the politics of a particular context (xv). Written from an international perspective, the book takes into account the educational experiences and practices from a few European countries, China (Hong Kong), Australia and New Zealand, and considers one example from the United States. Nonetheless, the authors' intentions are clear – to influence and offer relevant applications for an international understanding of what “learning to learn” means for a global world. That said, additional approaches from Africa and Latin American countries are strongly needed.

Learning to Learn can serve as something of a paradigm for excellence in education and learning. It can also function as a helpful text for reflecting on the meta-competencies required to be fully efficient in contemporary vocational contexts. This meta-competency includes a strategic competence for lifelong learning (93). The challenge of this discussion for religious and theological educators is evident -- it requires educators to examine the applications of “learning to learn” in their particular educational practices.

Educators will benefit from reading this book and may feel motivated to read the extended literature references in the book, particularly those concerning recent texts advancing new theoretical approaches on this topic. Furthermore, educators will benefit from the rich research data discussed in the theoretical and practical sections. This material represents an excellent source for advancing new research, while at the same time offering useful applications for educators' practices in their individual higher educational contexts.

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