**Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning**

**By John Hattie**

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This book emphasizes its research and discussion on the aspects of schooling that contribute to the most effective teaching practices, which, in turn, increase student learning. The author, John Hattie, is a professor and Director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne, Australia. And, for the past 12 years at the time of writing, he has worked with a team at the visible learning lat at the University of Auckland, developing a major assessment and reporting system for all New Zealand schools (Hattie, 2011, Preface). John Hattie’s focus for this book is for pre-service and in-service teachers to address their mind frames in regards to how success and progress are measured and to use that to inform the structure of their daily teaching and learning practices. He explains visible learning in two parts: identification of what makes a difference in student learning and showing students what it is they need to know. These principles are supported by data that Hattie provides and each chapter ends with exercises to help guide educators in applying these principles to their own classrooms and schools.

There are three parts to this book. The first part addresses the evidence Hattie provides to exemplify effective and ineffective teaching and learning. He also emphasizes how the educators’ mind frames with respect to student learning, methodology and their own role as evaluator, are integral to effective learning. The second part of the book focuses its attention on all steps of preparing lessons. And the third reflects the mind frames of all stakeholders in education.

**The Source of Ideas and the Role of Teachers**

This section addresses the book’s main implications for learning and presents the evidence from which Hattie’s theory was formed. Specifically, Hattie lists and clarifies the types and numbers of research studies he used to inform this practice of visual learning. He explains that his evidence comes from, “…800+ meta-analyses…52,637 studies---about 240 million students” (Hattie, 2011, chapter 2). He further explains that most everyone will net a positive result of learning if the benchmark is set at zero. He argues that his “hinge-point,” set at .4, is a point that is ‘average’ or a ‘real-world’ target for success. Finally, he addresses both the aspects of a teacher’s role in his or her craft and his or her passion for the process. Teachers who are impassioned for their craft, will constantly question their role and effectiveness in the learning process.

**The Lessons**

In this section on lesson planning, Hattie reiterates that powerful planning occurs when teachers collaborate in developing units, from the learning target, to desired levels of performance, to the progression of the unit. And he argues that using the “Backwards Design” planning method will aid in constructing a strong unit. He also presents the SOLO (structure of observed learning outcomes) model developed by Biggs and Collis in 1982. This model is an assessment system that reviews the levels of learning (surface versus deeper processing). Further, Hattie discusses that teachers should be well versed in teaching methods so that they can choose the best method for the learning outcome.

Throughout the unit, teachers should ensure that students understand what that learning target is and what success looks like. This constant progress monitoring clarifies for teacher and student, that which will be reinforced for a strong learning outcome and makes learning “visible” to the students. Equally important is a positive classroom environment that engages students in learning. Further, Hattie explains his “rope model” of self-concept (Hattie, 2011, chapter 4). That is, there are many contributors to students’ self-concept, and they are all co-contributors to how effective a student may be. Teachers need to be aware of these in order to provide a structure to enhance students’ self-confidence in the learning process. This whole planning process relates to Hattie’s “visible learning” concept, too. When students become their own teachers and see their own strengths and abilities to improve, teachers provide opportunities for strengthening one’s own life-long learning and self-efficacy.

**Mind Frames**

In the culminating section of his book, Hattie discusses the implications for eliciting change at all system levels. First, all stakeholders should have the same mind frame in regards to our thinking about teaching and learning. Therefore, “optimal decisions” can be made collaboratively, providing “systemic synergy” (Hattie, 2011, chapter 9). Next, strong leaders maintain high expectations and strong motivation, while providing a collaborative environment for staff. Finally, they provide an organizational structure to implementing new methods with fidelity.

John Hattie begins his book with a clear distinction that he doesn’t offer a panacea for improving education, rather a presentation of the ways of thinking, or “mind frames” which guide good teaching. Further, he states, “…there is no fixed recipe for ensuring that teaching has the maximum possible effect on student learning, and no set of principles that apply to all learning for all students,” (Hattie, 2011, Chapter 1). Yet, he does provide these mind frames to enhance deliberate practice and teaching. A majority of these practices are not unique to John Hattie. However, he does provide a frame and research data to exemplify their efficacy in improving education. Although he does provide exercises at the end of each chapter, they are still brief in nature and provide more of an overview and starting point, rather than a consequential, detailed format for implementing each mind frame.

Hattie’s focus is on a need for a true collaborative teaching environment where teachers work together, not in isolation. School districts across the nation have begun this process of working in professional learning communities (PLCs). The work of Richard and Rebecca DuFour, Mike Mattos and other leaders in education support this model. In *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work,* the authors state, “Working together to build shared knowledge on the best way to achieve goals and meet the needs of clients is exactly what professionals in any field are expected to do, whether it is curing a patient, winning the lawsuit, or helping all students learn” (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker and Many p. 12). Perhaps the author could have focused part of this chapter on strategies for implementing a more collaborative school or classroom, as it is deemed integral to making strong changes in education. Integral to making a change toward a more collaborative school, is teacher-awareness of the need. Hattie explains that schools need to be in agreement in order to elicit change, however, he offers very little in regard to constructing change at a site. In *Simplifying Response to Intervention: Four Essential Guiding Principles,* Buffum, Mattos and Weber state, “Too often, change initiatives are introduced by describing what needs to be done, without first providing a compelling reason why the change is necessary (Buffum, Mattos and Weber p. 21). Perhaps a more powerful assessment of how mind frames change and how to go about eliciting change with all stakeholders.

**Conclusion**

*Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning* provides a strong, research-based model of teaching strategies and effective change in the classroom. It offers insight into student-perspective and motivation and reiterates the current views on educational reform: collaboration, providing feedback and clear learning objectives. However, it provides more of an overview of these educational methodologies, practices and reforms. Although it purports to provide step-by-step guides and brief checklists to evaluate “visible learning,” these resources are brief and offer a cursory look at each topic. Overall, this book offers a clear assessment of the current major reforms in education. And, is most suitable for those who have just begun to delve into educational reform.

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