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Reviewing *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*



A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
by Heather Fry, Steve Ketteridge, and Stephanie Marshall
New York: Routledge, Copyright 2009, 525 pages.
ISBN 10:0-415-43463-7. \$47.00.

by
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This handbook, about teaching and learning practices in Great Britain and edited by three British academics, gives faculty a guide to organizing an effective course of study, from planning objectives to determining how to motivate students to reach their maximum potential. It can be read in any chapter order, though the authors recommend that the reader read chapter 2 first in order to insure a basis of understanding in current educational theory and student learning, especially that of the adult learner. After each chapter Fry, Ketteridge, and Marshall include sections for further reading on the topic, as well as websites and references.

The handbook is divided into three parts. Part One is titled “Teaching, Supervision and Learning in Higher Education.” The chapters in Part One contain interesting research and discussions regarding the reasons for student motivation in choosing to attend a university or college. The findings of this research include (a) college being a means to an end (better job possibilities), (b) personal development and (c) as a stop-gap (a delay in finding work, a decision imposed by a parent, an action in lieu of knowing which line of work to pursue and the opportunity of a social life that is attractive to the student).

In chapter 4, the authors discuss student motivation and claim that the instructor can increase student motivation or can cause students to lose what little motivation they may have had. This cause and effect relationship depends on the teaching techniques used and the instructor’s disposition toward students. The authors provide good insights relative to this issue and discuss several instruments that might measure an individual student’s motivation.

Chapters 3-10, in addition to covering motivation, also cover assessment, both of which are presented as keys to student learning. Chapter 5, “Lecturing to Large Groups,” and chapter 6, “Teaching and Learning in Small Groups,” present some helpful information. However, chapter 7, on eLearning, is less helpful in that it contains a list of possible online instructional and technological teaching tools, but gives no instructive information as to how to set up and use these tools.

Chapter 12 presents an excellent discussion regarding teaching and learning for student employability. The chapter points out that students need instruction on the interview process and on resume writing. The authors don’t focus on the form, but rather on the intent behind questions asked by future employers. For example, an interview question such as “Do you [the student] have problem solving skills?” may prompt a student to think that the question is asking the student to think of a problem he or she has solved independently and to discuss it. The student, if unable to think of such a problem, may believe that he or she has no problem solving skills. The authors point out, however, that the student may not realize that the employer is asking, in a broader sense, whether or not the student has worked on a problem with a team, analyzed a problem, and brain-stormed possible actions to solve a problem. The student may have had many such experiences in courses or in previous job situation, but does not see these experiences as

background that provides an answer for such a question. The remaining chapters in Part 1 cover supervision of dissertations, research students, and faculty assessing their own instruction.

Part Two, “Teaching in the Disciplines,” is specific to particular courses of study. Some disciplines discussed are mathematics and statistics in chapter 17, engineering in chapter 18, and language acquisition in chapter 21. Other chapters cover computer science, humanities, social sciences, visual arts, business, economics, and nursing and midwifery. A discussion of interest in Part Two is the value of the work experience to the ability to be hired. This is the type of information that students may not see as a clear cut benefit at first, but with a small amount of discussion, they may consider this and other benefits as ones that will eventually bring monetary rewards.

Part Three may be of interest to some American readers, but seems more specifically related to the British or UK career academics. This section supplies the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education. There is further discussion on how to build one’s credentials as an early career academic and using teaching excellence as a vehicle for career progression.

University faculty members will benefit from the information in this handbook. However, at times, it helps if it’s read through the perspective of a British understanding. Some words and phrases are used in ways that are unfamiliar to Americans and may cause a little confusion at first. For example, the authors often discuss the duties and practices of the tutor. In Britain, the tutor is a faculty member leading a small group or class, not the same as in the American context of a one-on-one advanced peer helping an underclassman in a particular subject or even an adult who is tutoring a student needing extra help. Another unsettling term is the name “Interrogating Practice”—given to the shaded boxes in each chapter—which is probably the equivalence of what Americans would call “Assessing Instruction.” However, aside from these interesting differences in language, the information can be valuable to veteran professors in reassessing their teaching practices as well as for newer faculty in making the transition to higher education.

Although the work is titled *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, at almost 500 pages, it is much more than the term “handbook” implies. The book offers a good starting place for new university faculty members in beginning to understand all the aspects of effective teaching and the university environment, and it’s a good resource for seasoned professors interested in improving their teaching practices.

References

Fry, H. Ketteridge, S., and Marshall, S., (2009), *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education*. New York: Routledge.

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