

Book Review

Richie, L. (2016). *Fostering Self-Efficacy in Higher Education*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

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The role and importance of Psychology is often overlooked or underplayed when considering strategies for teaching and learning. This book highlights the importance of considering psychological factors when working with students, with a particular focus on the concept of self-efficacy; the strength of our belief in our ability to complete tasks and achieve goals.

Laura Ritchie guides the reader through a number of key issues. Chapter one explains the current UK higher education (HE) environment and the importance of developing our practice in line with students' ever changing needs. In particular, there is a focus on the importance of acknowledging that for learners today, technology use is not an 'added bonus' in education but is part of daily life and therefore required within learning environments. Following on, Chapter two overviews the theoretical underpinnings of self-efficacy with some reference to the key Psychologist in this area Albert Bandura (1977). Chapter three reviews the various modes of communication available within HE environments and recommends strategies for how these can be used to foster self-efficacy. Useful simple suggestions for how we can change our language to aid self-efficacy beliefs in our students are given. Examples include avoiding the word "don't", which implies a belief that students have the potential to do the wrong thing, and instead providing clear instructions for what is needed to be done rather than what should be avoided. Chapter four considers some concrete examples of how self-efficacy enhancing activities can be embedded within daily teaching and learning encounters. Chapter five takes this further by exploring the role of mastery experiences and how to encourage students to take personal responsibility for developing their learning skills. Chapter six relates the importance of fostering self-efficacy to student attainment and readiness for entering the workforce. Finally chapter seven encourages the reader to develop their own self-efficacy beliefs and explores how continuing professional development can be used to ensure life-long personal development.

With potential to be a vital read for all HE lecturers there are some areas where this book is lacking. Some chapters feel a little repetitive with lists of what students need to achieve (e.g. listening, learning, thinking, reflecting) and only limited concrete examples of how tutors can foster self-efficacy to help our students meet these goals. More importantly, the author's

definition of self-efficacy seems to vary throughout, in places conceptualised as a concept which must be acknowledged as specific to particular tasks and in others making broad claims about how people with self-efficacy (portrayed as a general trait) have a range of positive qualities. Furthermore, some points about self-efficacy are disappointingly under referenced; while Bandura's work is mentioned throughout it seems a shame that, given the repeated reference to reflection, the work of other important researchers (e.g. Kolb's (1984) reflective learning cycle) are under-explored. Finally, occasionally the narrative feels potentially patronising, presenting concepts as new and exciting that have been central to HE teaching and learning for many years; using self-affirmations in learning outcomes (e.g. 'You will understand'), making lectures interactive and actively listening and responding to students are just a few examples.

This is a good book if you are interested in hearing examples of innovative teaching used across a number of disciplines, particularly music. The author delivers some interesting case study examples on; redesigning learning spaces for architecture students, encouraging active participation in philosophy lectures, and exploring understanding in students who are learning to play cello, all of which could be applied across teaching in other disciplines. However, if you are interested in an in-depth understanding of self-efficacy and its importance within teaching, learning and behaviour change, readers should instead seek out Bandura's original work or look at chapters covering self-efficacy in text books dedicated to behaviour change theory.

References

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191–215.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.