

# Book Review: Understanding and Using Educational Theories

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None declared

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A book review on

*Understanding and using educational theories*

by Aubrey, K. and Riley, A. SAGE Publications, 2016, 216 pages. ISBN: 978-1473905900

The book presents an overview of key theorists' and thinkers' perspectives on reflection, behaviourism, cognitivism, social learning and activity, critical pedagogy, andragogy - to mention a few. It is well structured with each chapter initially presenting a set of learning outcomes and an introduction. It then considers the theorist's background and his or her work. Subsequently, it provides a link to other theorists' views. Thereafter, it submits a critique, applies their work to practice and then offers a reflective task. Each chapter then closes with a summary, further reading suggestions and a reference list.

I found the concepts well defined, clearly explained, easy to understand and aptly applied to classroom contexts. Learning about theorists' backgrounds and their early experiences has afforded me the opportunity to step into their world and to perhaps better appreciate their philosophies and ideologies. For instance, Lev Vygotsky had what can be argued as a broad education studying medicine, law, history and philosophy. He was also referred to as "an enthusiastic follower of literature, theatre ... and the use of language structures" (Aubrey and Riley, 2016, p. 49). This broad exposure possibly developed his thinking about speech, language and learning. Perhaps his sophisticated reasoning capacity, informed (or swayed) his views on an individual's mental action and influenced his approach to cognitive development and the socio-cultural processes that are vital to this development.

The book has also further sharpened my appreciation of links with a range of educational theories. As an example the socio-cultural influences on learning and development as indicated above is also argued by other theorists including Benjamin Bloom, Malcolm Knowles, Basil Bernstein, Pierre Bourdieu (habitus) etc. I have also developed awareness of links between theorists who favour the democratic notion of pedagogy, child-centred and culturally based approaches. In this respect, Paulo Freire's offering of a "problem-posing education" as opposed to the "banking concept of education" (Aubrey and Riley, 2016, p. 132) bears close links with John Dewey's critic of the traditional schooling system, Vygotsky's constructivist theory, and Lave and Wenger's socially situated learning theories.

Another fascinating aspect of the book is the critique section in each chapter. Whilst there are seeming affirmations of theorists' perspectives, their submissions are also critiqued. This is a potentially valuable resource for those who wish to navigate the terrain of educational theories as well as take critical perspectives.

Lastly is the application of theoretical perspective to classroom practice. Yet again, this makes perspectives that may sound hypothetical and abstract more practical. As an example, Guy Claxton's ideas on 'epistemological apprenticeship' and 'learning power' have been seamlessly applied to classroom practice vis-à-vis the promotion of a supportive culture where new learning habits which foster self-belief and risk taking are formed.

In conclusion, the book is written in an accessible language and provides genuine insight for undergraduate and post-graduate students who are getting to grips with the concepts of educational theories, those who are refining their skills in critiquing educational theories, and those practitioners who are developing their learners' knowledge and understanding of education theories and their application to practice.

## REFERENCES

Aubrey, K. and Riley, A. (2016). *Understanding and using educational theories*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and approved it for publication.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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