The Study Habits Of Successful Learners: Critical Analysis Of Articles

Throughout the duration of this essay it is going to discuss the study habits of successful learners as well as critically analysing 3 articles that support this statement. All the pieces of chosen text focus on similar ideas that contribute to the study habits of successful learners. The first piece of information is an article by Carol Dweck called ‘Growth’ (2015) which discusses the idea of a growth mindset and how this contributes to success. The next article that has been chosen is a piece named, Contributions of Study Skills to Academic Competence and lastly a research article written by Wendy Jayne McMillan titled ‘Your thrust is to understand’-how academically successful students learn (2010).

Dweck’s article ‘Growth’ (2015) is a piece that solely focuses on growth mindset. It is believed that having a growth mindset can improve academic achievement for children who struggle with learning. This concept has been investigated for over 20 years and believes that intelligence is continuously developed rather than being set at one stage. Dweck (2015) states that interventions have been found to help assist the teaching of a growth mindset. The findings from these interventions have shown that a growth mindset results in better achievement results and gain. The growth mindset focuses on measuring progress and rewarding the growth achieved, similar to the concept of positive reinforcement. Skinners operant conditioning theory as cited in How Children Learn by Pound, L (2006) supports the theory as it believes ‘The popular view is that behaviour is shaped by punishment and rewards- that humans act to avoid punishment and gain reward.’ The ideas in Dweck’s ‘Growth’ are very similar to those expressed in Skinners positive reinforcement theory. The positive reinforcement theory discusses the idea that when positive behaviours are rewarded, children will continue to repeat them happily. Although Skinners theory relates more to the emotional development of children whereas Dweck’s focus on the cognitive ability, both conclude the same ideas. Does this mean growth needs to be formed intellectually, physically and emotionally for academic competence. Growth is innate in us as humans. In education growth is encouraged in many ways such as the atmosphere of the classroom, the attitude and the mindset of the student. A strength of adapting a growth mindset is that the learning done can be expanded. Penultimately this will lead to greater progression as the student believes in themselves and is open to expanding their intellectual ability. When we as educators reward and praise progression, the student acknowledges this and continues to make the progress. However, a negative aspect to this is that not all students show growth in a way that is identifiable. This is common in students who are struggling. Therefore, if their work is not being recognised and praised then they will be stuck in a fixed mindset and not reach their goals. This emphasises the importance and need for assessments within educational settings. Currently as part of the statutory framework, practitioners are required to monitor children’s progress, record it and reward this to ensure children are meeting their goals.

Dweck’s article although is not current, it is a subject that is continuously being researched and developed further. As it was written in California it suggests that the research can be applied nationally to all students. The article is very detailed and shows in depth the effect of a growth mindset on academic competence. The title shows the reader the topic of the text and what is going to be discussed. Dweck discusses the positive influence that a growth mindset has upon

learners and how a fixed mindset can affect progression. Therefore, the article shows no bias, although it does not discuss any more study habits that may be deemed successful to learners. The article is set out in a logical format that is clear to follow and easy to read. The language used is not too complex but describes and links to the topic well. Although Dweck's article is a strong, concise piece that discusses a study habit that contributes to success, is it unrealistic to assume every child is able to develop a growth mindset as opposed to a fixed one. The research disregards the other factors that could affect the mindset of the student such as social glass, gender, disability or parents influence. It has been made evident that the Growth mindset is an important aspect in education and one that could affect development and learning.

Contributions of Study Skills to Academic Competence discusses the key study skills related to academic achievement. Gettinger, M and Seibert, K, J (2002) argues that in order to be a good studier, the student must be a good strategy user too. These strategies could include goal setting, planning or reflection tasks. Kucan and Beck (1997) research supports Gettinger and Seiberts ideas on study strategies. The research project focuses on a reading strategy known as 'thinking aloud', studied the functions and presentation of different texts. It concluded that discussing texts and finding meaning was more effective in the student retaining information. Study strategies play an important part in supporting unskilled students as they are able to learn these strategies and apply them. This will improve cognitive ability by being able to understand, interpret and retain information. Gettinger and Seibert argues that for study skills to be sufficient and encourage progression then students must be enthusiastic, inspired and responsible for learning. Early years practitioners can support these ideas by supporting each child's individual learning strategies through planning activities that stimulate learning and support all needs. From these observations' practitioners can assess the child and plan next steps to determine the child's acquired knowledge and how to build upon that. This is reinforced in the Early Years Statutory Framework that states 'It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles…' (Department for Education,2017, p.13). However, there are limitations to implementing this idea, for instance some children may not be encouraged to learn at home due to poverty or parental views. Parents are the first teachers of children, therefore without any resources or negative views the child will be reluctant to adapting any strategies linked to academic competence.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this article are that students need to posses' good study skills and strategies in order to support their learning and progress. Also, the concept of active learning has been highlighted as a key concept for academic competence. This idea of multiple strategies is effective as it means it can be taught to anyone as there is many strategies to suit all learning styles. The article was published in 2002, although it is obsolete the findings and strategies are very relevant to todays education. Many of the strategies such as reading aloud or note taking are ones many students still choose to use today. Regarding the authors, Maribeth Gettinger is a professor at the University of Wisconsin who has published many research articles on children's development and Jill Seibert is also a professor at the University of Carolina. There status shows that they are well respected and reliable authors. The text is very formal but written with text that is understandable for a wide range of audiences.

McMillan (2010) recognises how there are multiple factors that must be adopted in order to achieve academic success. She discusses the self-regulation theory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies as well as the motivations that contribute to learning. McMillian argues that academically successful students are inspired to learn by a subject of their own. This motivation enables the student to engage with the subject. This motivation could be positive self-

image, future goals or personal targets. Although the motivation could be from a teacher or tutor. This idea can be supported by the Early Years Framework (2017) as it outlines that every child in a setting must have a key person. The key person is responsible for supporting and encouraging learning in relation to the child's age, stage and goals. Lev Vygotskys' theory further supports the points made. The ideas Vygotsky expressed explains the effect of the social environment on the child, considering the relationships with others, resources and influences. Although the motivation and environment are important for supporting learning the cognitive strategies are as important too. This is a positive as every child will have a motivation. However, they may not know what it is, therefore the teacher can identify it. In Early Years this can be resembled as the child's key interests in which we use for planning. McMillan goes on to state the cognitive strategies that academically successful students use. She says that underlining, highlighting, making notes and paraphrasing are all important skills needed for successful learning. The effect of effective note taking, and paraphrasing can be seen within adult learners. Students are required to make notes and paraphrase to support their essays and work to suit an academic style. This is a positive as it is a skill that can be learnt early on and then be applied to many aspects of life. Bedford and Wilson (2013) emphasise the need for effective note taking. They state that using dotted lines, boxes and arrows make the information clearer. Although this method is simple and effective, there can be limitations to implementing the method. Some children may not have the resources to enable them to highlight or take notes. In addition, this may not be the best approach for an adult or child with special education needs as it involves processing a vast amount of information clearly and independently.

McMillan's study is a valuable source as it discusses relevant theories and supports the, with data and research. Although the article views the work of dentistry students, the ideas are relevant as they discuss the habits that enable students to be successful learners. However, it could affect the reliability of the study skills as they are applied to dentistry students as opposed to learners. Overall, the conclusions that can be drawn from this article are that cognitive strategies coincide with effective studying.

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