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Hattie, John (2008) *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. NY: Routledge

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John Hattie's *Visible Learning* is a splendid book for educators and scholars for four reasons.

First, education is following agriculture and medicine by several decades. These fields are based on a rigorous scientific research but they have taken the next step in comparing methods, evaluating their relative effects, and educating practitioners who may best know about the costs and difficulties of implementation. Since all science is fallible, the synthesis of multiple studies is necessary for a solid foundation of applied science and practice. Education researchers have steadily accumulated many findings, which have been synthesized during the last few decades. Hattie must have engaged in a huge effort to bring these syntheses together in this book, but enables its readers to plan new research as well as educational practice.

About the Author

John Hattie is Professor of Education at Auckland University and director of the Visible Learning Lab. His areas of interest are measurement models and their applications to educational problems, including meta-analysis.

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Second, Hattie provides estimates of the sizes of the many effects surveyed in more than 52,000 studies so that they may be readily compared. He relies on the sophisticated calculations developed in the last few decades for determining the size of effects.

Third, Hattie usefully divides the results into separate chapters on the student, home, school, teacher, curricula, and teaching. He draws on a huge volume of findings under each of these topics. In teaching, for example, there are 365 syntheses of nearly 26,000 studies involving more than 52,000 teachers, students, and others.

Fourth, Hattie displays a "barometer" for each effect, which shows the overall effect divided into negative, medium, and high zones. Both the relative sizes of the positive and negative effects are shown with the neutral point at zero and an arrow pointing to the weighted average, just as on a real barometer measuring atmospheric pressure.

There are two comparative downsides to the book as a whole. Even given 392 pages of fine print, it is not possible to weigh all methodological considerations involved in this type of research. Some syntheses, for example, do not take into consideration the units of analysis such as students versus classrooms, which can produce different sizes of effects. Some studies, moreover, are randomized experiments; others are less well controlled. The careful reader, however, can consult many references for the details of the research, the syntheses, and the definitions of effects as recommended for practice.

Finally, though I recommend this book for educators, they will need to take time to master the first three chapters to understand fully the scope of the book and the methods employed.

About the Reviewer

Herbert J. Walberg, a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education, is a University Scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His research focuses on educational productivity and human accomplishments.

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