

Dispositions to Study: Engaging With An Ingredient of Student Success

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Research Into Approaches to Studying

Study of first year students at Northumbria University

Reasons for studying:

Interested in course (96.2%)

To experience student social life (80.3%)

Enjoy learning (79.6%)

Want particular job (34.8%)

What my parents want me to do (12.2%)

Appropriate/Inappropriate Attitudes

Time management important when studying at university 97.2%

Important to attend all timetabled teaching sessions 96.1%

Important to read about the subject, even when this is not required for an assignment 77.9%

Had difficulty motivating myself when studying for my last qualification(s) 43.9%

Think studying at university will be similar to studying for my previous qualification(s) 18.3%

As the first year marks do not count towards the final degree classification, it does not matter what mark I get, so long as I pass 11.6%

Relationships Between Variables

Positive attitudes linked to interest in course and enjoying learning, negative attitudes linked to student social life and studying because what parents wanted

Studying because interested in course linked to good marks and satisfaction

Studying for student social life linked to satisfaction

Studying for job linked to poor marks

Additional Questions to be Addressed by Dispositions to Learn Project

- Are there forms of success that go beyond student retention, achievement and satisfaction and that we should be trying to measure?
- Is there a relationship between students' reasons for studying, their approaches to studying and their dispositions to learn?
- Are the factors that affect the level of success (however defined) that students achieved fixed, or can interventions to support them in their learning have an impact?

HEFCE /Paul Hamlyn Foundation Student Retention Grants Programme

- Northumbria Bedfordshire and Manchester Universities
- To illuminate and improve student retention (student progression, student success)
- One of seven funded three year projects
- Building on previous work with ELLI
- ELLI?
- Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory

A Hypothesis in Bristol

Double Helix of Learning

(McGettrick 2002)

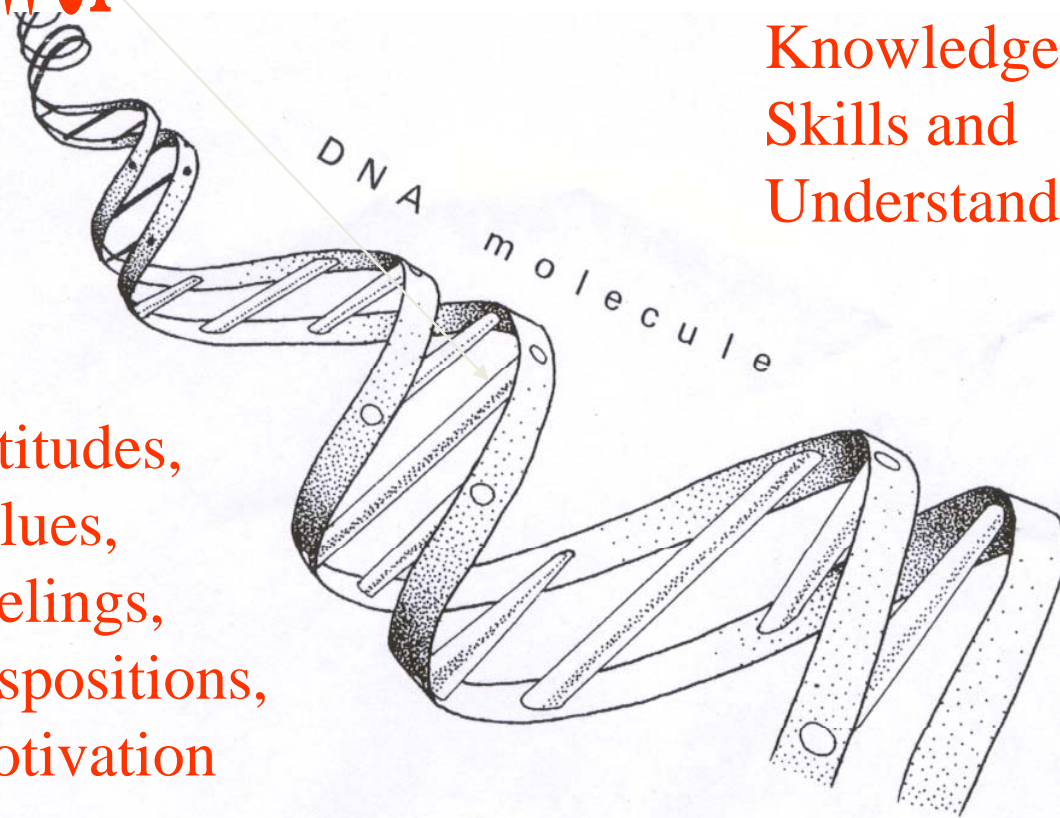
Learning Power

Achievement

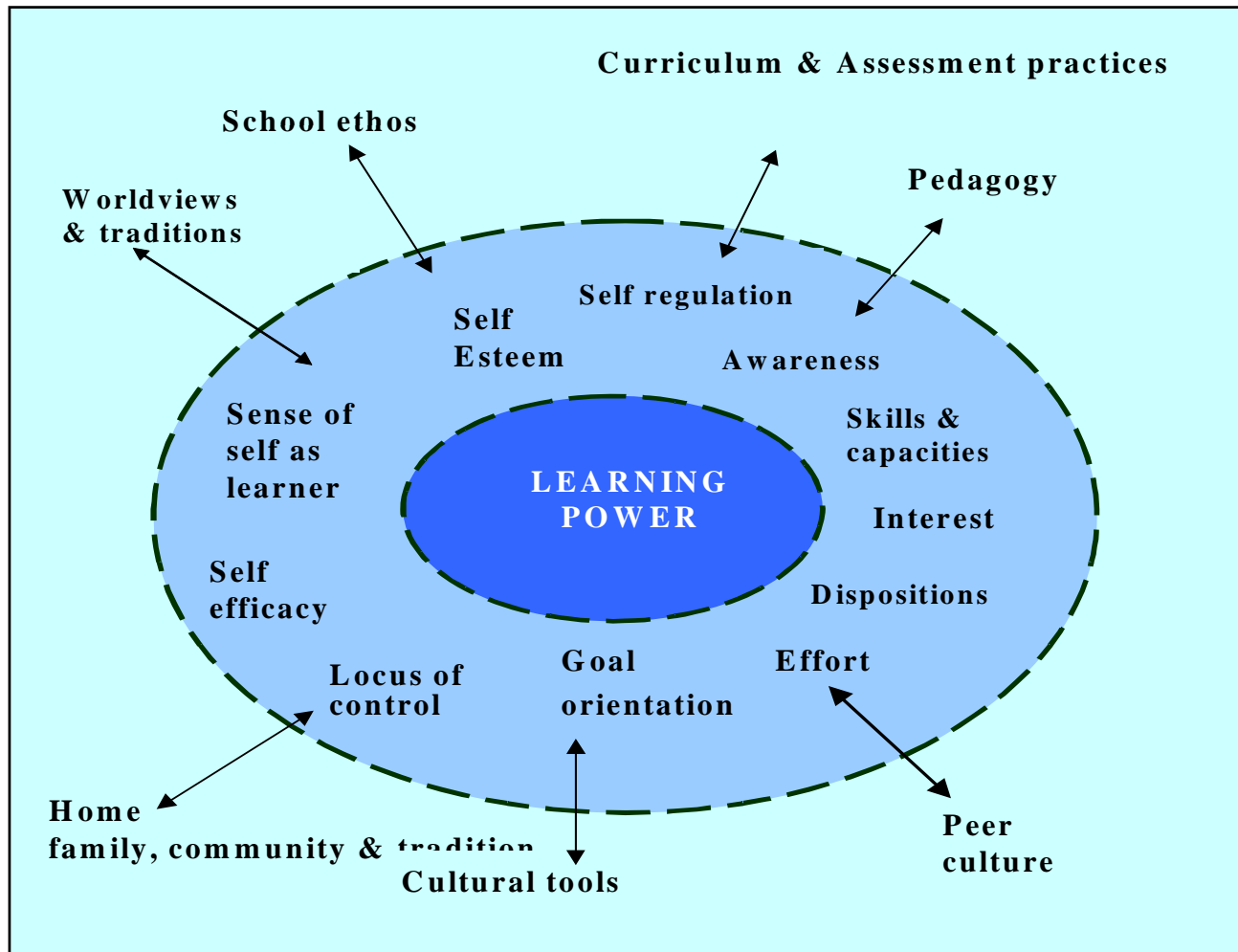
Knowledge
Skills and
Understanding

Personal
Development

Attitudes,
Values,
Feelings,
Dispositions,
Motivation



Factor analysis: what impacts on learning?



The ELLI Instrument (Assessing Learning Power)

- 72-item questionnaire
- Tested and Validated – over 10,000 cases in the database
- Self-report
- Contextual and subject to change over time
- Statements of how I might think or feel or behave as a learner
- How ‘like me’ are the statements
- 4-point Lickert Scale
- Available online
- Instant feedback: a 7-point ‘spider diagram’: your ELLI profile
- Class/group profiles also produced

Seven Dimensions of Learning Power

- ▶ Changing and learning*
- ▶ Meaning making*
- ▶ Critical curiosity*
- ▶ Creativity
- ▶ Learning relationships
- ▶ Strategic awareness
- ▶ Resilience
- ▶ Being stuck & static
- ▶ Data accumulation
- ▶ Passivity
- ▶ Being rule bound
- ▶ Isolation & dependence
- ▶ Being robotic
- ▶ Fragility and dependence

Research Questions

Do students' dispositions change in the course of their academic programme?

Does using ELLI in itself boost student retention & achievement?

Are there dispositions to learn that have an impact on student retention & achievement?

Can retention initiatives based on problematic dispositions be formulated & evaluated?

Critical questions

Do students need to reflect on their learning or simply to learn?

What is the difference between 'supporting learning' and 'learning therapy'?

Is there a relationship between reasons for studying, attitudes and learning dispositions?

Are dispositions malleable? Can resilience (for example) be developed?

Are they really measurable?