2009

The Brain That Changes Itself

Kristin Thompson
Avondale College, Kristin.Thompson@avondale.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: https://research.avondale.edu.au/teach
Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://research.avondale.edu.au/teach/vol3/iss2/14

This Reflections, Impressions & Experiences is brought to you for free and open access by ResearchOnline@Avondale. It has been accepted for inclusion in TEACH Journal of Christian Education by an authorized editor of ResearchOnline@Avondale. For more information, please contact alicia.starr@avondale.edu.au.
BOOK REVIEW

_The brain that changes itself_

Kristin Thompson
Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Avondale College, NSW

When scientists first started to look at the convolutions of the brain, they may well have been reminded of a geographical landscape. There are few geographical frontiers still to be conquered, but the very latest equipment is only now making exploration of the brain a feasible venture.

In 2007, the Canadian psychiatrist, Norman Doidge, M.D., wrote a book that has received several favourable reviews, _The brain that changes itself_. I paid $35 for my paperback version. Although it is of equal interest to the layperson, teacher, administrator, therapist and scientist, the writing style is easily accessible to the layperson. It has been such a hit that it has become an international bestseller. It was reprinted five times in 2008, with yet another reprint in 2009. Doidge uses numerous case studies to illustrate how amazingly the brain is able to change in response to various situations or trauma in order to improve quality of life.

The book’s main theme is that people can learn because brains can change. This proposal is of great significance to teachers and education administrators. This book emphasises that biology is not destiny—things can change—and that the environment can help.

Doidge shows that the brain is not static.

We have been so enamoured by the machine and by computers that we have limited our understanding of the brain to the likeness of a machine that we ourselves have made. Doidge claims contact with many dedicated scientists and laypeople that have experienced the recovery of brain functions traditionally considered unrecoverable, and concludes that the brain is plastic. By providing biological explanation for some of our wilder taboos, he also makes sense of unconventional phenomena. The shoe fetish, for example, may arise because the brain maps for feet and sex are very close.

After reading this book we may feel guilty that we have not had the money, or have not been able to mobilise the effort needed to help our students and staff achieve the potential for change that our plastic brains allow. Some of the changes reported in the book have required considerable financial, physical, emotional and faith resources. Case study after case study is cited, challenging the status quo.

Norman Doidge visited Australia this year. I heard him open an address by quoting the Hebrew Scriptures, saying that the Lord God spoke and there was light. He said, “thought influenced substance”. He went on to say that in the Gospel, the Word becomes flesh—“thought influences substance”. He then went on to use video case studies to illustrate his point. During the book signing, I asked whether Jesus’ words about telling a mountain to throw itself into the sea is an indication that Jesus sees the world as plastic, to which Norman Doidge answered, “Well, thought influences substance”.

The book is very engaging and accessible. It makes change seem not only possible, but understandable. I have also been given new inspiration in reflecting on the teachings of Jesus. Enjoy the case studies and see what it does for you! TEACH

Looking for new school tours? Uplift Tours and Travel is your answer

“We organise school tours to domestic and international destinations that provide students with unique cultural and educational experiences!”

Arranging a school tour or trip can be a difficult job on its own, let alone trying to get it done between classes.

_Uplift Tours and Travel_ is a fully accredited international travel agency specialising in ‘experiential travel,’ providing unique travel experiences for special interest groups, schools, churches and independent travellers. This is your one-stop travel shop committed to service excellence.

Whether it be educational tours, fun tours, field trips or mission / service based trips, the team at Uplift can put together the whole trip for you, taking away all the stress and time-consuming work of researching, planning, and putting together a memorable and successful trip for your students.

They will liaise with groups closely from the moment you make contact, to the time your group arrives safely home. All educational tours can be built around specific curriculum requirements such as languages, history, geology, and social sciences, with the option of including fun activities along the way. As a fantastic value-add, they can provide you with a range of information required for parents as well.

Uplift has partnered with international care and missions organisations to offer unique missions / service tours for school groups, offering a range of overseas itineraries including Borneo, Fiji, Thailand, Africa and North East India.

There is a wide selection of itineraries for overseas and within Australia, or they can create your own itinerary based around your specific requirements.

So if you’re considering a combined educational and fun tour to New Zealand, a geology field trip, or a missions trip to Fiji or India, or wherever you want to go and have a fun, productive time, contact the friendly team at Uplift for a refreshingly easy way of organising your next school trip.

_Uplift Tours and Travel_ are also committed to providing safe Schoolies Safari adventures with a ‘no drugs or alcohol policy’. On offer this year and 2010 is Fiji, which is an exciting tour around Fiji’s main island Viti Levu and is a great blend of sun, sand, culture and adventure.

For further info on all Uplift services please visit the website _www.uplifttoursandtravel.com_ or contact Claire McErlane at Uplift Tours and Travel on 07 5499 3220 or email claire@uplifttoursandtravel.com