

The essential characteristics of effective teaching



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The meaning of the word effective is: “adequate to accomplish a purpose; producing the intended or expected result” (Dictionary. com, 2012). There are a great many and varied characteristics that make for effective teaching. The individual teacher should have a deep understanding of the curriculum, syllabus and subject in order “to create an ideal learning environment for each Australian student that provides a foundation for successful, lifelong learning and participation in the Australian community” (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2012, overview tab), as well as cater to a diverse range of students regardless of their background or ability.

The individual teacher will have a positive philosophy on pedagogy and a professional approach to their chosen carrier, have sound learning strategies which may encompass constructivist ideas, have exemplary planning skills to scope and deliver their lessons, and have a sound behavioral management plan. The first key point relating to effective teaching is professionalism. Professionalism in teaching in broad terms relates to the standard, whether it is a formal structure or an informal understanding, which defines the processes and status of the teaching fraternity and the individual teacher” (Whitton, Barker, Nosworthy, Sinclair & Nanlohy, 2010, p. 119). A professional teacher embodies academic, ethical, legal, professional, personal and cultural standards (Whitton et al. , 2010).

A teacher is required by law to possess an undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree from a recognised institution; this certification may satisfy the requirements for teacher registration in their particular state authority (Whitton et al. , 2010). An effective teacher will ensure they have

met with these requirements and in addition may have completed complementary certificates such as first-aid and resuscitation.

Professionalism in teaching is dependent on the right conduct and practice. What is morally right in a school and for the individual teacher, are in part dictate by the ethos and philosophy of the school (Whitton et al. 2010).

An effective teacher ensures that as part of their professional responsibility, they maintain a commitment to lifelong learning, which may take the form of reading, research or study (Whitton et al. , 2010) and ensure they teach within the school's and governing bodies' policies and procedures, use correct conduct and are transparent in their behavior. “ Any information obtained confidentially must not be used in any manner which is inappropriate” (Whitton et al. , 2010, p. 123), and could lead to legal complications for the individual teacher or the school they are working for.

Every teacher must complete relevant documentation clearing him or her to work with children and ensure that they exercise their common law duty of care to protect students from reasonably foreseeable injuries (Whitton et al. , 2010). An effective teacher will act on verbal, physical or emotional bullying, report any evidence of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, ensure they do not discriminate or defame any individual and encourage their peers and students alike to follow their professional lead.

An effective professional teacher will present to work and all school activities on or ahead of time and will demonstrate superior personal standards in how they dress, act, speak and behave (Whitton et al. , 2010). An effective teacher will be respectful and tolerant towards students, parents and peers

of varying race and religion. It is evident in the video by Davis & Gooding (2008), that some of the students are of different backgrounds, and that the teacher shows no favoritism and treats all students the same. The second key point relating to effective teaching is teaching strategies.

Constructivism is one teaching strategy widely used and is currently the dominant approach in Australia (Fetherston, T. 2007). An effective constructivist teacher will guide and support students (Marsh, 2008) in their learning and help them to construct their own ideas by drawing on prior knowledge and linking it to new learnings, thereby allowing the student to construct their own version of external events (Fetherston, 2007). There has been an emergence of two prominent theorists - Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky (Fetherston, 2007).

While both support and promote the effectiveness of constructivist teaching in today's learning environments, these two theorists have differing perspectives on constructivism. Piaget is associated with psychological constructivism, which focuses on cognition and individual learners and how they construct their knowledge, while Vygotsky is termed a social constructivist that focuses on language and the group (Fetherston, 2007). As seen in the video by Davis & Gooding (2008) the teacher embodies both theorists' perspectives in her approach of constructivist teaching.

The teacher asks the students " does the worm have legs? " - this encourages the students to use their long term memory (prior knowledge) and draws on their new knowledge by asking the students to categorise the mini beasts into three separate categories of slither, crawl and fly. Appendix

A continues with this method by using the student's existing knowledge of the previous lesson and moves on to impart new knowledge by way of guiding and supporting (Fetherston, 2007) the students in their lesson.

As seen in the video by Davis & Gooding (2008), the teacher incorporates group work quite extensively into the lesson by starting out with the whole class together (collaborative learning) and then breaks the students up into three different groups (cooperative learning). Collaborative learning relies on a group of students working together to arrive at a common goal, while cooperative learning requires the individual student to work autonomously and consult the group when required.

In these instances the teacher is more focused on the group (Fetherston, 2007). There are three distinct advantages to working in a group. Firstly, it develops the students' interpersonal skills by communicating with other members of the group. Secondly, a wide range of thinking is promoted as students discuss ideas and solve problems with each other, and lastly as students encourage and support each others ideas and work together, they develop emotionally (Fetherston, 2007).

There are nine grouping techniques a teacher can utilise when planning their lessons, when doing so they must also take into consideration the lesson content and the diversity of the students as well as the space and resources available to ensure their use of this strategy is effective. The third key point relating to effective teaching is lesson planning. If a teacher wants to teach in ways that are consistent with the NSW Quality Teaching model, or any other systematic approach to helping students learn, hey have to plan - they

have to think carefully about what they will do and why they will do it (Killen, 2007). An effective teacher will have planning skills, knowledge and understanding of the taxonomies of learning (Whitton, 2010), an in-depth knowledge of the curriculum, syllabus and subject knowledge to incorporate into their long-term (over a year/s), medium-term (a unit of work) and short-term (lesson-by-lesson) lesson planning (Killen, 2007).

It is the responsibility of the individual teacher to make sure every aspect of the curriculum has been covered in their planning process, and all required information has been relayed to the students equipping and enabling them to progress to the next level of their education at the end of the school year. Individual lessons won't be successful if they are not integrated carefully into medium-and long-term planning (Killen, 2007).

Each lesson plan must include content (subject being taught with links to the curriculum), product (what the learner produces by way of demonstrating what they have learnt), process (the behavior or actions of the student), environment (the conditions the lesson will be taught in) and finally the level of attainment achieved by the student to assist in evaluating the desired objective (the focal point of the lesson) (Whitton, 2010). An effective teacher takes into consideration the individual needs of their students when planning (Killen, 2007).

Not all students learn at the same pace; some students may have intellectual challenges or sensory impairments, they may need additional instruction or help from a Teacher's Aid. Whatever the situation it is imperative the teacher has incorporated these needs into their lesson plan/s.

In addition, an effective teacher will be organised, ensuring all material and resources are available and set up, ready to go, maximising the time spent on the lesson content rather than preparing the lesson itself. No matter what level of expertise a teacher has, thoughtful teacher planning helps to make student learning purposeful, effective and efficient" (Killen, 2007, p. 67). As seen in the video by Davis & Gooding (2008), there are a lot of activities set up for student learning, extensive planning was required, down to gathering a selection of mini beasts from the garden the night before. The teacher already had students assigned to their groups and had prepared the Teachers Aid with a list of student names and the activity they would be assisting with.

Without this thoughtful and careful detailed planning this lesson would not have had good learning outcomes for the students. Sometimes no amount of planning will ensure a lesson is successful. In the video by Davis & Gooding (2008), the teacher meets with technical problems when her smart board stops working; the teacher continues on regardless and does not stop to correct the problem.

Appendix A embodies the taxonomies of learning by addressing the intellectual, emotional and physical aspects of the learner (Whitton, 2010) including the required areas such as: content, objective, resources, timing, space, grouping, prior knowledge, teaching and learning strategies, sequence and formative evaluation and summative assessment. The fourth and final key point relating to effective teaching is behavioral management.

Cruickshank, Jenkins and Metcalf (2005) as cited in Marsh “ contend that a comprehensive management plan is needed that includes proactive (preventative) and reactive (disciplinary) management strategies. They suggest that effective teachers begin early in the school year to systematically implement a carefully developed plan” (p. 42). An effective teacher will know and understand their teaching style and how it impacts on the students and their behavior in the classroom, what will the balance be between power and care? (Whitton et al. , 2010).

There are four types of approaches the effective teacher can use. The first is an authoritarian approach - where the teacher expects their students to obey and uses fear tactics to maintain control of the class. The second is a permissive approach - where the teacher lacks organisation and confidence, is inconsistent and allows students to dictate how and when a lesson will be taught, The third is an authoritative approach - where the teacher successfully balances proactive and reactive strategies in the classroom and the fourth is of rejection - where the teacher is neglectful (Whitton et al. 2010).

An effective teacher will include positive strategies in their classroom management plan such as establishing rules, advocating student accountability, designing a classroom environment conducive to learning, establishing positive relationships with students, providing effective communication and instruction, teaching new behaviours, catering to different learning styles and reinforcing desirable behaviours. It is important for teachers to aim to reinforce and teach desirable behaviours and minimise the use of punishment (Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1994. as cited by Whitton et <https://assignbuster.com/the-essential-characteristics-of-effective-teaching/>

al. , 2010). An effective teacher will also establish a positive classroom climate (which relates to the 'feeling' of the room), establish routines and find a unique balance between the quantity introduced, establish effective communication channels using both verbal and non-verbal cues and work together with students and parents (Marsh, 2008).

In the video by Davis & Gooding (2008), the teacher uses an authoritative approach to teaching, she praises the children when they give a correct answer and encourages them to try again when they give an incorrect answer. Her classroom was set up well making full use of the room by spreading her activities out around the room, enabling students to move about freely. The students responded to her verbal and non-verbal cues - when asked for the class to pay attention the children responded straight away.

The teacher also employs the use of hand movements and the tapping of a tambourine to gain the attention of the children, this shows established rules and boundaries and a respect for the teacher. The teacher is able to cater to students' individual needs if required, by utilising the Teachers Aids she has assigned to her. Appendix A includes an authoritative approach to the students. It also makes use of established verbal and non-verbal cues and promotes a positive classroom environment.

An effective teacher understands what it means to be an effective educator and what is required of them to achieve this, they will have a deep understanding of the curriculum, syllabus and subject knowledge equipping them to write and plan effective lessons, they will take into consideration the

needs and abilities of all students in their day-to-day interaction with their class, and have a positive philosophy on pedagogy. An effective teacher will at all times act and present themselves in a professional manner, have sound learning strategies and a strong behavioral management plan.