

# Quality assurance strategies in teaching



## The Teacher

Gravells (2014) states that ‘ Teaching is about helping someone reach their full potential, whether this is for personal or professional reasons’. (Gravells, 2014, p. 22). The most important aspect of teaching is to ensure that learning is taking place. This essay will exploit how to teach, theories that support teaching styles, how to improve on teaching skills and what method works best. How we learn, theories behind learning and assessment.

Every Teacher has a theory about learning. A set of beliefs, ideas, and assumptions about the nature of learning, and teaching. The teacher believes certain practices bring about learning, and others don’t. Schön called this ‘ theory-in-use’. it is the ‘ theory-in-use’ which guides what teachers do and informs them as to plan and teach lessons. Argyris and Schön (1987) elaborate at great length on the intricacies of theories-in-use but then identify a single theory-in-use which they claim virtually all professionals use without being aware of it. Within an adult education context this type of theory-in-use may include general opinions and attitudes concerning self-directed learning, Andragogical principles, student-centred approaches to teaching, the concepts of empowerment and emancipation, the role of formal academic disciplines, and the definition of education itself”

As a teacher’s reflection on his ‘ theory-in-use’ improves, the teacher become more effective, more adaptable and better able to solve problems. Effective teachers are always changing what they do, this is because they are continually learning how better to teach. Teachers can improve and add to “ theory-in-use” by reflection. A teacher does this by going right round the

Kolb learning cycle. Reflect on experience, Learn, Apply, and Do. Petty (2009) proposed a Checklist for using reflection to learn how to teach. These are “ Do you always find time to reflect on your lessons? Do you consider what went right as well as what went less well? Do you ask yourself ‘ why did it go like that?’ and try to establish sound learning points that you can apply in future teaching? Do you deliberately try to learn from one lesson how to improve the next? Do you manage to avoid too much blaming of students, and of yourself? Do you seek out opportunities to talk about your teaching with those that might help? Are you able to give yourself a ‘ medal and a mission’ after each lesson however well or badly it went?” (Petty, 2009, p. 319).

Constructivist learning is a process of personal hypothesis-making. It describes how learners construct their own knowledge. The principle of learning according to cognitivist school include a teacher need to set high-order tasks. Which means analysis, synthesis and evaluation. High-order skills can be taught and set ladders of tasks. Teachers should set tasks that gradually climb Bloom’s taxonomy.

Assessment can be formal by asking questions to confirm knowledge and/or observing practice to confirm skills. It can also be informal by using discussions, quizzes and tasks. If you don’t assess you won’t know what has been learnt.

The teaching, learning and assessment cycle is a systematic process which helps ensure your learners have a positive experience and are able to achieve their goals. The process can start at any stage of the cycle and keep

on going, however, all stages should be addressed for learning to be effective. The teaching, learning and assessment cycle revolves round a learner at the middle of the cycle. It consists of the following; identifying needs, planning learning, facilitating learning, assessing learning, and evaluating learning.

Identifying needs by finding out what your organisations, your own, and your potential learners ' needs are, finding out why learners are taking the programme and what their expectations are, carrying out initial and diagnostic assessments, agreeing individual learning plans, ensuring learners are capable of progressing to their chosen destination.

Planning learning to include preparing teaching and learning plans, and materials to ensure you cover the requirements of the programme, liaising with others.

Facilitating learning; teaching, training and facilitating learning using a variety of approaches and resources, obtaining feedback to make improvements.

Assessing learning; checking your learners have gained the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding at all stages throughout their time with you, using formal and informal types and methods of assessment, obtaining feedback to make improvements.

Evaluating learning by obtaining feedback from others, evaluating your role, and all aspects involved with the learning process in order to make

improvements for the future. Evaluation could also take place after each stage of the cycle.

Running throughout the cycle is quality assurance. This is a system of monitoring all aspects of teaching which occur with learners throughout their time of training, from when they commence to when they achieve. Good practice for all programmes is to include a system of internal quality assurance. However, this might be a formal requirement if you are delivering and assessing towards a qualification. This means a colleague at your organisation will monitor and sample aspects of everything you do to ensure you are being fair to all learners, making correct decisions and following the relevant policies and procedures. If you are teaching towards a qualification, there might also be an external quality assurance system. This involves a person visiting from the organisation that awards the qualification, to ensure all staff are following the requirements correctly.

Most teachers and trainers follow the cycle from beginning to end; however, your job role might not require you to be involved with all aspects. For example, you might not carry out the identifying needs stage as other staff within your organisation will do this. You will, however, need to liaise with them to obtain the information to help you plan your sessions. You might be training a member of staff in the workplace and only carry out the planning learning and facilitating learning stages, as someone else might assess their progress. Again, you would need to liaise with who else is involved with your learner.

To teach and train effectively involves not only the approaches you use to teach your subject, i. e. discussions, group work and paired activities, but many other factors that go before and after the taught session. This includes planning logically what you will cover in your sessions, preparing your materials and resources, assessing that learning has taken place, giving feedback, keeping records and evaluating yourself and the experiences your learners have had. Never underestimate the amount of time you will need to dedicate to the role.

There are two aspects to boundaries for teachers and trainers: boundaries between your teaching or training role and other professional roles, and other aspects you are bound by which might hinder or challenge your role. Professional boundaries are those within which you need to work and it's important not to overstep these, for example, by becoming too personal or friendly with your learners. Boundaries are about knowing where your role as a teacher or trainer stops. You should be able to work within the limits of that role but know that it's okay to ask for help. Don't try to take on too much or carry out something which is part of someone else's role.

Other boundaries include the things you are bound by, for example, policies and procedures, the amount of administrative work you are expected to complete, or a lack of funding or resources. These boundaries can often be interpreted as the negative aspects of your roles and responsibilities. You might have other professional roles besides teaching; for example, you might interview learners and have to decide whether they can attend a programme or not.

Never feel you are on your own, find out who can help and advise you when you need support. If you make a decision not to accept a learner, you will need to justify your reasons. You should find out and follow your organisation's policies and procedures. If you are a new teacher or trainer, you might have been allocated a mentor, someone to help and support you as necessary and you will find it helpful to keep in touch with them and ask for advice. When you are with learners, you need to remain in control, be fair and ethical and not demonstrate any favouritism towards learners; for example, by giving one more support than the others.

Most programmes and qualifications should follow a quality assurance system. This should ensure they are being delivered and assessed accurately, fairly, consistently and reliably. You might not be involved with all aspects of quality assurance at your organisation; however, they will impact upon your role, therefore you should familiarise yourself with the requirements. For example, finding out when policies and procedures are reviewed, analysing surveys and feedback from learners, following up appeals and complaints, and reading feedback from audit and inspection reports.

Quality assurance can be internal, i. e. observing delivered sessions, talking to learners, checking assessment decisions, and sampling learners' work and associated records. It can also be external, i. e. inspectors, auditors and quality assurers checking compliance with their systems and requirements.

Information gained from aspects of quality assurance must lead to improvements for your learners, yourself and your organisation.

Quality assurance is an ongoing system to monitor and evaluate a product or a service. To the contrary, quality control seeks to find problems, whereas quality assurance seeks to avoid problems. Quality assurance is therefore ongoing and proactive whereas quality control can only be at the end and therefore reactive. Quality controlling a programme once learners have left will not help them; however, quality assuring a programme while the learners are still at the organisation will enable any issues to be resolved.

Internal quality assurance (IQA) also has a supportive element. When you are new to a role, an organisation, or are working with new standards of a qualification, the role of internal quality assurance is particularly important for both you and your organisation. It is far better to identify any areas that need to be resolved early on so that you can have the necessary support and advice to get things right.

The internal quality assurance process relates to a product; for example, a qualification a learner is taking which is accredited by an awarding organisation. It can also relate to a service to develop people; for example, to help staff perform their job roles better or learn a new skill. Internal quality assurance should be carried out from commencement to the completion of the product or service. If there is no external formal examination taken by learners, there has to be a system of monitoring the performance of all staff and all activities involved. If not, staff might make incorrect judgements, or pass someone who hasn't met the requirements perhaps because they were biased. If you are delivering and assessing a qualification, there should be an internal quality assurer within your organisation who will sample aspects of your work. They will not reassess the

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learners' work, they will audit your work to ensure you have correctly followed the delivery and assessment procedures and made fair, valid and reliable decisions. The types of audit they will carry out will include monitoring how you deliver and assess and sampling your decisions and records. The amount of auditing will depend upon many risk factors, such as the experience of the staff involved, the number of learners they have, where they are located and the complexity of the qualification.

## References

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