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Practical Strategies for FE and Post-16 Tutors

TERRY SHARROCK

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Meet the author

Terry Sharrock

A qualified teacher and former Ofsted inspector, Terry has worked in education for over 30 years, both in this country and the USA. He has taught in schools, colleges and adult and community learning for over 25 years.

Terry was a coach and cohort leader on the National Teaching and Learning Change Programme, designed to improve teaching, learning and assessment in a number of contexts.

He runs his own successful educational consultancy and regularly carries out observations of teaching and learning for a range of providers. Many of the ideas for this book have been developed from observations of outstanding teaching and learning sessions. He is the author of *Embedding English and Maths: Practical Strategies for FE and Post-16 Tutors*, also published by Critical Publishing.



Introduction

The idea for this book is a result of many years of carrying out lesson observations. As the years passed and the number of observations grew, it seemed to me that I found myself having the same conversations with teachers about recurring themes including differentiation, assessment, active learning, embedding English and maths, promoting equality and diversity, and British values. Some teachers view these aspects of teaching and learning as fads that come into and out of fashion (usually driven by the perceived requirements of Ofsted), and attempt to provide evidence of whichever is in fashion at the time. There is an amount of truth in this. There have been periods of time when certain aspects of teaching, learning and assessment have been more looked for than others. But I would argue that all the elements of teaching, learning and assessment that are discussed in this book are equally important and, when integrated naturally into the learner's experience, form the basis of quality teaching, learning and assessment. The purpose of this book is to help you understand the meaning and application of these aspects.

How to use this book

If you have been observed and some aspect of your teaching, learning and assessment has been highlighted as an area for improvement, you can use this book to understand more about that area and find ways to strengthen this aspect of your teaching.

Each chapter takes some commonly identified area for improvement and discusses:

- » the meaning of the term;
- » what it looks like when it is working well;
- » some ideas of how you might strengthen this aspect of your teaching practice;
- » actions to move forward in improving this area;
- » some suggested reading to help you develop further.

You can work through the whole book, or you can look at a single chapter on a theme which you have identified (or has been identified for you), following an observation. Each chapter contains a suggested activity which you are encouraged to try out. A template is provided in Appendix 1 to help you record and reflect on your findings, possibly in consultation with other teachers.

The structure of each chapter

Following this Introduction, Chapter 1 looks at lesson observations in general and Chapters 2–9 contain the following features.

A bit of theory

This feature looks at research on the chapter subject and comments on how findings from this research can support you in your practice. While this will quote academic sources, the focus in this section is very much on the practical application of academic findings to your practice.

From the files

This feature takes case studies, which are real examples from practice that I have observed, and looks at one effective example and one less effective example. After reading the case studies you are invited to think about the examples and how they compare to your own experience, before reading about the key learning points of each one.

Think about it

This feature is an opportunity to reflect on your own practice. Use this section as a starting point for a conversation with others about how you might improve your teaching and learning. A template of a reflective journal is provided in Appendix 1. Use this to record what activities you tried, reflect on what happened and plan for future development.

Try this

This feature includes at least one suggested activity for you to try with your learners, connected to the subject of the chapter. The intention is that these activities are starting points for you to adapt and develop your own activities, best suited to your learners.

Summary (What should I do next?)

Each chapter contains a summary of the key points and suggestions as to what to do next to further develop in this area.

Further reading

This section suggests further reading that you might like to consider for further exploring the issues discussed in the chapter.

Chapter summaries

Chapter 1 Lesson observations

This chapter discusses the purpose of lesson observations in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and includes an examination of the advantages and

disadvantages of graded and ungraded observations. There will be advice for observers on how to judge the quality of learning and write reports that focus on learning, together with information on how to carry out post-observation discussions. There is advice on how to prepare for observations including how to deal with problems when being observed, such as discipline issues, inappropriate comments and IT malfunctions.

Chapter 2 Beginning and ending lessons

One of the frequently highlighted areas for improvement following observations is the beginnings and endings of sessions. This chapter stresses the importance of beginnings and endings. It discusses what should be included in beginnings such as outlining the learning intentions and discusses ways to ensure that learners understand what is to be achieved in the lesson. It also discusses the use of starter activities and the importance of linking them to the main intentions of the lesson. It goes on to discuss the importance of a good ending to the session and allowing enough time to recap the learning. It looks at how to measure the effectiveness of the learning and different methods that might be used to engage learners in a productive summary of the learning.

Chapter 3 Differentiation

This chapter opens with a consideration of the use of the term ‘differentiation’ and how we might usefully define it in the context of education. The chapter includes discussion of why it is important and how it can contribute to more effective learning. There is an examination of relevant literature on the subject and on best practice in applying differentiation in learning. There are also examples of effective and less effective practice in the use of differentiation. The chapter includes practical activities for tutors to use and reflect on.

Chapter 4 Assessment for learning

This chapter looks at methods of assessing learning. It focuses on formative or ongoing assessment, as much of the work on summative assessment is covered in the discussion of summaries in Chapter 2. It examines different strategies to assess formative learning, beyond the use of direct questions. It discusses ways to ensure that all learners’ understanding is checked and not just the individual learner who has answered the question. The chapter includes practical examples of formative assessment and a review of current literature and thinking on the most effective ways to assess learning.

Chapter 5 Giving feedback

This chapter looks at feedback on learners’ work. It discusses best practice in providing written and verbal feedback. It discusses how to ensure that the feedback you give is adopted by learners and leads to improvement. It discusses how to make the most effective use of written feedback and draws on experience of best practice in developing skills through feedback on written work. The focus is on the development of written

English and gives examples of the most effective practice to produce marking that leads to improvement. The chapter includes suggestions on effective use of written, verbal and peer-to-peer feedback.

Chapter 6 Effective questioning

This chapter looks at the use of questioning. There is a discussion of the purpose of questioning, a consideration of some of the most common errors and how teachers can be more effective in the use of different forms of questions. This chapter also includes a review of literature and theories of different forms of questioning that encourage evaluative and analytical skills. There is an opportunity for teachers to reflect on the types of questions they use and activities to promote effective questioning.

Chapter 7 Embedding English and maths

This chapter looks in detail at the key issues around successful embedding of English and maths and includes a list of ten things providers can do to improve English and maths results. It discusses how judgements on the quality of embedding of English and maths are made, and how best to engage reluctant learners and encourage them to attend English and maths lessons. The chapter considers some common questions that teachers ask, such as 'Does every lesson have to show embedding of English and maths?'

Chapter 8 Promoting equality and diversity

This chapter looks at the issue of promoting awareness of equality and diversity in learning sessions. Many teachers are uncertain what their role is in promoting awareness of equality and diversity, how best to plan for its inclusion, or how to deal with issues if they arise during the lesson. The chapter firstly looks at what is meant by the promotion of equality and diversity, what the role of the tutor is in promoting this learning and some examples of good and poor practice in this area. It includes discussion of unconscious bias and its effect on teaching and learning. This chapter seeks to clarify what is expected of teachers to effectively promote awareness and to meet the requirements of the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework 2015. Finally, the chapter provides case studies of good and poor practice, together with practical activities to promote awareness of equality and diversity.

Chapter 9 Promoting British values

This relatively new requirement of the Common Inspection Framework 2015 is still causing teachers some anxiety as they look to meet their requirement to promote British values. This chapter starts with a discussion of what is meant by British values and goes on to clarify the role of the teacher in promoting these values, together with examples of good and poor practice in this area. There is a consideration of how British

values can be embedded into different vocational areas as well as tips on how to deal with controversial issues in discussions.

And finally...

I hope you find this book useful and that it can lead to viewing lesson observations as a useful tool to allow professionals to discuss and reflect on the business of providing the best educational experience for every learner. The most effective observer of your lesson should be yourself. If somebody else is in the room and commenting on the learning I hope that it is a chance to share ideas and discuss approaches that can have a positive effect on teaching, learning and assessment for your learners.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Teacher reflective journal

Date/Time/ Group	Event	Experience	Reflection	Learning
Details of date, time and group taught.	What did I try?	What happened?	Why did it happen?	What did I learn? What could I do next time?

Appendix 2 Find the words starter activity

This was recommended in Chapter 2 as a starter activity.

Below are 300 words that can be made from the letters of the word 'confidentiality'.

You might not want to use all 300, but you can pick out sets of words to give to learners after the exercise, to reinforce some learning points such as:

- » building spellings from root words, eg 'diet' to 'dietician' or 'confidential' to 'confidentiality';
- » you could look at double letters in spellingm such as 'flat' and 'flatten' and 'fat' and 'fatten';
- » ask learners what happens to the first vowel sound in each of the following words: 'din' and 'dine'; 'dot' and 'dote'; 'not' and 'note'; 'cod' and 'code'; and 'con' and 'cone'. Is there a pattern that might help them in their spelling?
- » you can choose words to extend learners' vocabulary in their chosen vocational area. For example, explore the meaning and discuss in which vocational contexts learners might use the following words (some suggestions are given in brackets):
 - » 'acid', 'acidity', 'dietician' and 'dialect' (health care, childcare);
 - » 'antidote', 'clot', 'canine' and 'fatten' (veterinary, animal care). 'clone' and 'cloned' in these areas provides an opportunity to discuss ethical issues if appropriate;
 - » 'cadet', 'cite', 'citation', 'incite' and 'yield' (public services);
- » You may choose to work on homophones such as 'ail' and 'ale'; 'faint' and 'feint'; 'tale' and 'tail'; 'lane' and 'lain'.

300 words from the word 'confidentiality'.

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------|------------|
| 1. ace | 11. alien | 21. ate |
| 2. acid | 12. aloft | 22. atone |
| 3. acidity | 13. alone | 23. atoned |
| 4. action | 14. and | 24. attend |
| 5. actioned | 15. annoy | 25. cadet |
| 6. act | 16. annoyed | 26. cafe |
| 7. acted | 17. ant | 27. calf |
| 8. aid | 18. antidote | 28. can |
| 9. ail | 19. any | 29. candle |
| 10. ale | 20. anyone | 30. candy |

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| 31. cane | 64. cold | 97. denial |
| 32. caned | 65. colt | 98. dental |
| 33. canine | 66. con | 99. detail |
| 34. canny | 67. cone | 100. detain |
| 35. cannot | 68. confident | 101. dial |
| 36. cannon | 69. confide | 102. dialect |
| 37. canoe | 70. confine | 103. dice |
| 38. cent | 71. confined | 104. dictate |
| 39. citadel | 72. contain | 105. dictation |
| 40. citation | 73. contained | 106. die |
| 41. cite | 74. content | 107. diet |
| 42. cited | 75. cot | 108. dietician |
| 43. city | 76. coy | 109. din |
| 44. clad | 77. day | 110. dine |
| 45. clan | 78. daily | 111. ditty |
| 46. clay | 79. dainty | 112. ditto |
| 47. clean | 80. dale | 113. doe |
| 48. clod | 81. dance | 114. dole |
| 49. clone | 82. dane | 115. donate |
| 50. cloned | 83. date | 116. done |
| 51. clot | 84. deaf | 117. dot |
| 52. clotted | 85. deal | 118. dote |
| 53. cloy | 86. dean | 119. dye |
| 54. cloyed | 87. dealt | 120. eat |
| 55. coal | 88. deft | 121. élan |
| 56. coat | 89. deftly | 122. elf |
| 57. cod | 90. defy | 123. end |
| 58. code | 91. defiant | 124. enfold |
| 59. codify | 92. defiantly | 125. entail |
| 60. coin | 93. delay | 126. entity |
| 61. coined | 94. den | 127. face |
| 62. coil | 95. dent | 128. faced |
| 63. coiled | 96. deny | 129. facile |

130. facility	163. fitted	196. intent
131. fact	164. flan	197. iota
132. fad	165. flat	198. italic
133. fade	166. flatten	199. lad
134. fail	167. fled	200. lady
135. failed	168. float	201. laden
136. fan	169. floated	202. lain
137. faint	170. foal	203. land
138. fancy	171. foil	204. lane
139. fancied	172. foiled	205. late
140. fat	173. fold	206. latte
141. fate	174. fond	207. lead
142. fated	175. fondly	208. leaf
143. fatted	176. font	209. leafy
144. fatten	177. idea	210. lean
145. fainted	178. ideal	211. led
146. field	179. idiot	212. left
147. feint	180. idiocy	213. lend
148. fen	181. idiotic	214. lent
149. fend	182. idle	215. let
150. fiend	183. idol	216. lice
151. fidelity	184. in	217. lido
152. fin	185. incite	218. lie
153. final	186. incident	219. lied
154. finale	187. incidental	220. life
155. finance	188. infancy	221. line
156. fine	189. infant	222. lined
157. fined	190. infanticide	223. linnet
158. find	191. infantile	224. lint
159. finite	192. infidel	225. lion
160. file	193. innate	226. lit
161. filed	194. intact	227. load
162. fit	195. intend	228. loan

229. lode	253. oil	277. tide
230. loft	254. oily	278. tidy
231. lofty	255. oiled	279. tile
232. lot	256. once	280. tiled
233. nail	257. one	281. tilt
234. nailed	258. only	282. tilted
235. nation	259. tact	283. tin
236. neat	260. tacit	284. tint
237. neatly	261. tacitly	285. tiny
238. nice	262. tactile	286. titan
239. nicely	263. tale	287. titanic
240. nicety	264. tail	288. toad
241. nine	265. tailed	289. today
242. none	266. taint	290. toil
243. not	267. tainted	291. ton
244. notated	268. talent	292. tonal
245. note	269. talon	293. tone
246. noted	270. tan	294. toned
247. notice	271. tannoy	295. tote
248. noticed	272. tea	296. total
249. oat	273. ten	297. toy
250. ode	274. tend	298. yield
251. of	275. tent	299. yet
252. often	276. tidal	300. yodel

Appendix 3 Commentary on case study 1, Chapter 3

After reading case study 1 in Chapter 3, compare your findings with the commentary below.

1. What comments would you make about the stated learning outcomes?

The learning outcomes are useful as far as they go. It would be interesting to see how these outcomes will be judged. For example, how will the tutor know if all learners can tell the difference between a formal and informal letter (or email, or article on a topic?) What about expressing the learning outcome as a target, for example judging whether learners can successfully identify three examples of formal writing and three examples of informal writing?

Similarly, how will you know if all learners can plan and/or write a letter of complaint? It would be useful to have some success criteria that learners can use to gauge how well they have been able to produce an effective letter of complaint. You could use exam board criteria to familiarise learners with the expected outcomes. These criteria could be included in the learning outcomes sheet that learners might refer to throughout the lesson.

2. What use could be made of the information provided in the session file? What other information would be useful to have on each learner?

Information on previous grades at GCSE and the results of initial assessment are a useful starting point and is something that is often included in profiles, but if that information is going to result in effective differentiation for learners I would suggest that we need to go further than that. Knowing that a learner missed out on a Grade C/Level 4 in maths by one mark can be useful background information but of more use is what we do with that information. Identifying each learner's particular strengths and areas for improvement in their subject area and in their levels of English and maths is the ideal, but in practice may be very difficult to achieve if you have large numbers of students. Focusing on one area of improvement and following it through so that the learner makes good progress and 'masters' that one skill would be good.

As well as learners' past achievement (or non-achievement) and their present progress, the particular needs and attitudes towards learning can be useful background information and serve to remind tutors of the individual nature of each student. Additionally, it can be very useful for anyone observing the learning to have background information on each learner. This usually takes the form of a class profile and can be invaluable in any post-observation discussion of the effectiveness of the learning for each individual.

3. Could the task of composing a complaint be related to the different vocational areas?

In this session all learners were given the same scenario (posting a response to a poor review on a holiday review site). It might have been better to adjust the task slightly to relate to the vocational areas represented in the group, so that the response was to a bad review for a meal (catering); a faulty product (customer service); or a poor experience at the salon (hairdressing).

4. How effective is the learning in the activity of bringing learners to the front to discuss the information they would include in the complaint?

Inviting learners to the front of the class to speak is a common activity. Often it is conducted in the way described here. Learners come to the front individually or in small groups and make their presentations. This in itself can be a major achievement for many learners. In this example, learners are thanked, receive a round of applause and retreat to the safety of the crowd. I feel there is a valuable opportunity missed to help learners develop skills and confidence in speaking in front of others. Comments and suggestions on posture, clarity of voice, eye contact with the audience and even what to do with your hands would be useful skills to develop in this situation. If you know your learners well, you can carry this out with sensitivity, help develop these skills for each learner and demonstrate real differentiation.

5. What comments would you make about the final assessment activity?

This kind of self-assessment is a good idea and should not always be left to the end of the session. In this session learners completed the task individually. It might be that the tutor will take the self-assessments and use the information to build into the learning

for the next session. Let's hope so. At the least the tutor should share this intention with learners and let them know what use will be made of the information they are supplying. The tutor could have gained more from the activity (and provided themselves with less work) by asking learners to compare self-assessments and pick out, say, one target for the next lesson. In this way the tutor will have clear, individual, differentiated targets for each learner.

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