

1 Introduction

This guidebook brings together the best international knowledge about teaching. It is written to serve the needs of teaching students on Initial Teacher Education courses, to help their lesson planning, reflection and classroom observation. It will help students to broaden their repertoire of teaching methods and use each to the best advantage. Whilst recognising that particular subjects such as maths or foreign languages have their own methodology, this handbook aims to establish a common core of good practice.

It is also intended to support staff development, whether on an individual or whole-school basis, in ways which link directly with practice. Each section has suggestions for collective discussion, giving participants the opportunity to recall and share relevant examples from their own teaching. Because it is difficult for teachers to change deep-seated habits, the most effective use may involve pairs of teachers agreeing to observe and mentor one another.

Finally, it can be used to structure lesson observation for school improvement, providing a common vocabulary and shared aims. It is particularly important to break with the notion of observation for top-down control, and to engage as equals in supportive forms of observation and guidance. It is well established that supportive observation and mentoring is an effective way of assisting one another as colleagues to change aspects of daily practice, for example to transform the way questions are used.

You will find it helpful to focus as much on learning as on teaching. A good way is to concentrate (discretely) on two or three pupils and their responses to the lesson. This can be followed by discussing part of the lesson with the pupils and looking at what they have produced to evaluate their participation and progress. This helps to avoid seeing teaching simply as performance, and instead encourages the observer to look at the teacher's role in leading and activating learning.

Teaching in England has been severely limited in the recent past by excessive and ill-conceived government interference, and the weight of top-down surveillance. The pressure to transmit as much knowledge as possible has led to shallow learning, including learning by rote. This handbook is intended to enable more thoughtful, interactive and in-depth learning.

These guidelines are not intended as final, but they are the product of extensive experience in teacher education and CPD, as well as a range of key texts in English and various other languages. Whether you are using this handbook individually or collectively, I would be happy to receive your responses and reactions, disagreements and other practical examples.

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