



Published: 12 July 2012

NHTA

Back to Basics in Teaching and Learning in Hairdressing

Summary

Following an inadequate grading at inspection in September 2010, Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency Ltd (NHTA) realised that action was necessary to address the problems of poor teaching and learning that were impacting on all aspects of their business. Intervention was first offered by the LSIS Improvement and Development Service with support provided from an expert hairdressing education adviser. This was followed by the appointment of a then interim Quality Manager to take improvements forward. One of the September 2010 inspection team took on this role. NHTA knew that the inspector had the expertise and also the knowledge of their organisation to be able to help them improve. Over the following year there was a focus on improving teaching and learning, taking the teaching team right back to basics. The company efforts were rewarded with satisfactory grades at re-inspection in 2011 and a much more confident and effective teaching team.

About NHTA

NHTA is a private training company that provides work-based learning to the hairdressing industry. The company offers intermediate and advanced apprenticeship programmes and an access to apprenticeship programme. The company was formed as a partnership in 1983 and bought by its current owners in 2007. There are about 100 learners who are employed in hairdressing salons in Nottingham city centre and surrounding areas. Learners attend the academy for off the job training, usually once a fortnight. In addition, assessors visit learners at their workplace.

The challenge

NHTA was judged inadequate by Ofsted in September 2010.

The owners and staff were surprised by the judgement. In their self assessment report they had graded themselves as good. They knew that success rates were poor and below national averages but were entrenched in familiar ways of doing things and unable to pinpoint where exactly everything was going wrong. Through the inspection it became evident that improvements were needed in all framework areas. This case study focuses on how the organisation tackled teaching and learning in particular. This area too was graded inadequate. The issues were teacher centred, unimaginative teaching and learning with insufficient challenge resulting in poor attendance, poor retention and low success rates. Lessons were poorly planned, lacking effective aims and objectives and usually had the same format. In practical lessons, learners became bored and unmotivated as few

clients came to the academy for them to practise on. The delivery model was inflexible with all apprentices signed on for two year programmes no matter what their prior achievement. The owners had tried to make improvements by introducing a more flexible delivery model and employing new staff. However, at the time of the inspection, these changes had little impact as the longer serving staff were resistant to change and the new staff, although keen, had insufficient training and direction. Most staff were unqualified in teaching and some had no aspiration to become qualified. There was a system of teaching and learning observation but it was over complicated, and did not lead to continuous professional development (CPD) for staff.

The activity

NHTA was offered support from the LSIS Improvement and Development Service (LSIS IDS). An adviser with expertise in hairdressing education and training was allocated to the company for some days of support in between January and July 2011. It was evident that the adviser needed to take the teaching team right back to basics and he spent time working with the team to improve their understanding of what the elements of a good lesson are and what observers or inspectors look for.

Delighted with this impetus for change, the company owners decided to employ a Quality Manager who would have the expertise to continue the work of the LSIS IDS. They had someone in mind. They approached one of the inspectors who had been on the inspection team that found the training provider inadequate. The inspector knew exactly what was wrong with the training and had the knowledge and skills to build on the work started by the LSIS IDS. She agreed to take on the role of Quality Manager. She introduced a new simpler observation framework and then spent her first 4 weeks observing lessons across the provision: practical, theory and key skills. These were not graded but enabled a profile of lessons to be established along with all the support areas needed. This profile allowed her to plan a series of CPD sessions for the teachers. These went right back to basics, how to structure a lesson, how to write objectives, different teaching and learning strategies, the importance of a group profile and differentiation, starters and plenaries. Each CPD session was structured as a lesson should be to demonstrate good practice.

The Quality Manager developed a quality calendar. Part of this was two weekly teaching and learning meetings. The agenda includes sharing good practice and avoiding bad practice. This was the first time that the teachers, including key skill teachers and a teaching assistant, had all come together to discuss what they did. Also on the Quality Calendar were teaching and learning resource CPD sessions. These took place every 3 months and each teacher would present a teaching resource that they used to good effect. The resources were then developed and put into a bank for all to use.

After all this activity, teachers were ready for graded observations and these were re-introduced in April 2011. They were unannounced and followed by extensive feedback and support as needed.

The NHTA Director of Business Development tackled the problem of lack of clients for practical sessions. She contacted Groupon, the website with discounted offers. The response was astonishing. The academy found themselves with 750 clients whom they were able to accommodate.



The outcomes

The raft of improvements brought added pressure to staff and some left. However, the six remaining teachers are now enrolled on teacher training courses and are those who are keen and able to drive the company forward. More teachers will be employed as recruitment is now rising.

There is now a robust system of observing teaching and learning with 64% now graded good or better, an improvement from 53% in just a few months. Lessons are learner centred with active learning methods. There are regular CPD sessions forming part of a Quality Calendar. The client base has improved, providing real people for practical hairdressing sessions. Teachers are more confident and have improved their planning to the extent that they now develop and individualise schemes of work for each learner which includes employer input.

The impact

Success rates are improving. There is still a little way to go to exceed national averages but staff are confident they will achieve this. Staff are better at teaching with improved observation grades. There is less evidence

of bad practice to avoid at their regular teaching and learning meetings. They are able to effectively evaluate their own performance. From inadequate in September 2010, NHTA was judged satisfactory in all areas by November 2011. In self-assessment and safeguarding they achieved Grade 2.

The lessons learned

NHTA say never take your eye off teaching and learning. They underpin everything you do.

Vocational tutors may have expertise in their subject but not in teaching.

Take them back to basics if necessary and invest in training and CPD.

Don't be afraid to try something new. Allow teachers to use their creativity, develop their innovative ideas and give them confidence in their abilities.

Provide time for shared reflection. Openly discuss what works and what doesn't.

Useful links

www.nhta.org.uk

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