Introducing the Tutor Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP)

Gillian Forrester

As head of teaching and learning development at Gateshead College, Gillian Forrester set out to introduce 16 staff to TEEP, in order to encourage them to adopt more student-centred practices.

Gillian recognised that her colleagues would need support in doing this so she also used several coaching techniques. To find out the impact of the programme, Gillian ran a structured focus group with 10 of the participants. Personal statements from the tutors showed that the knowledge and skills from the TEEP training programme were successfully transferred into practice by all 16 tutors and that there were many benefits for both the tutors and learners, such as tutors having the confidence to change their practice, greater student engagement and more active involvement in lessons.

What TEEP involves

TEEP draws heavily on research about teaching and learning. The TEEP model is underpinned by a number of strategies relating to assessment for learning, thinking skills, effective use of ICT and collaborative problem-solving. Learners are encouraged to ask their own questions, research their own answers and make use of graphic organisers and mind maps to compare and contrast information. They may be offered a carousel of practical activities (such as making a poster) which all the learners move through, or they can be offered a choice of activities from which they can select. Learners are also given the opportunity to apply what they have learned to other problems, to present their new understanding to others and to defend their views. Fundamental to the approach is the work the tutor does to create an environment conducive to learning. For example, they ensure high challenge and reduce stress by smiling and using "we" rather than "you" to refer to the learners and themselves to promote the idea of "our" learning (i.e. including the tutor's).

"Before TEEP, my main strategy was to use a lot of PowerPoint presentations"

"My learners just used to regurgitate my handouts"

The impact TEEP had on the learners

Informal feedback showed Gillian that the learners enjoyed the TEEP lessons hugely compared with previous, more traditional, methods of teaching. The lessons were more fun and engaging due to the use of interactive activities and of resources such as music and video. One tutor who tried to revert back to traditional methods (due to a lack of time) found the learners complained about it being "the boring way" of learning.

The impact TEEP had on the tutors

The tutors commented on how they had changed to a more student-centred approach. One tutor said, for example, "Thinking back to my teaching before being introduced to TEEP, my main strategies involved using a lot of PowerPoint presentations in order to get theoretical information across to students". Another tutor commented: "I feel I used to run my classes, not exactly with an iron fist, but with an element of control. There were issues with my old methods – primarily that they [the learners] used to regurgitate my handouts/notes".

Why coaching support was important

The evidence from Gillian's project has led her to believe that the successful introduction of the TEEP programme was due not only to the TEEP approach, but to coaching support too:
- the tutors were organised into pairs to provide each other with support throughout the programme – using video to enable them to reflect on the impact of the new strategies
- a TEEP support group was set up to create a forum to discuss problems and share success stories, and
- the college intranet was used for tutors to share their resources and ideas.

The college had an existing culture that supported open discussion so the tutors were already aware of coaching techniques. This was a great advantage to Gillian and she felt it made all the difference when encouraging the tutors to take on new methods of teaching: "If you take the coaching element out, it will still be a success, but nowhere near as effective in transferring these skills to actual practice".

What does Gillian plan to do next?

Gillian found this project to be a phenomenal experience and it's given her lots of evidence for the accreditation in ILN Level 7 qualification. Next she plans to work with TEEP to deliver training for Learning and Skills practitioners. TEEP is already well established in the schools sector, but Gillian feels that practitioners in all phases should be able to develop their practice in this way.