

Coaching research

The most effective design for staff development is based on the evolutionary model of teacher learning founded on the ideas of B. Joyce and B. Showers. Whether we teach ourselves or we learn from a training agent, the outcomes of training can be classified into the following levels of impact.

Awareness.

At the awareness level we realise the importance of an area and begin to focus on it. The road to competence begins with awareness of the nature of a particular teaching strategy, its probable uses and how it may fit into the curriculum.

Concepts and organised knowledge.

Concepts provide intellectual control over relevant content. Essential to the application of a new teaching strategy is a deeper conceptual understanding – for example, about how the new strategy supports learning. This moves the teacher’s learning beyond simply the acquisition of ‘tips for teachers’.

Principles and skills.

These are tools for action. At this level we learn the skills of implementing the teaching strategy. We also acquire the skills for adapting it for students with varying levels of ability to respond to the new mode of teaching perhaps by teaching them the skills they lack. At this level there is potential for action – we are aware of the area, can think effectively about it and possess the skills to act.

Application and problem-solving.

Finally, we transfer the concepts, principles and skills of the new teaching strategy to the classroom. We begin to use the strategy, combine it with others in our repertoire and integrate it into our style. Only after this fourth level has been reached can we expect to impact on the pupil learning.

The matrix that follows relates these phases to the research of Joyce and Showers (X denotes evidence).

Level of Impact / Training method	A General awareness of new skills	B Organised knowledge underlying concepts and theory	C Learning of of new skills	D Application on the job
1	X			

Presentation/description (e.g. lecture) on new skills				
2 Modelling the new skills (e.g. live or video demonstrations)	X	X		
3 Practice in simulated settings	X	X	X	
4 Feedback on performance in simulated or real settings	X	X	X	X
5 Coaching on the job	X	X	X	X

A key element in achieving such effects is the provision of in-classroom support. We have found in our own school improvement work that it is the facilitation of coaching that enables teachers to extend their repertoire of teaching skills and to transfer them from different classroom settings to others. From our experience, coaching contributes to transfer of training in five ways.

In particular, teachers who are coached:

- generally practise new strategies more frequently and develop greater skill;
- use their newly-learned strategies more appropriately than ‘uncoached’ teachers;
- exhibit greater long-term knowledge retention and skill regarding those strategies in which they have been coached;
- are much more likely than ‘uncoached’ teachers to teach new models of learning to their students;
- exhibit clearer understanding with regard to the purposes and uses of the new strategies.

Although peer coaching is an essential component of staff development, it also needs to be connected to other elements in order to form an effective school improvement strategy.

Source:

The work of B.Joyce and B. Showers was adapted from **Creating the conditions for teaching and learning** by David Hopkins and Alma Harris (et al) David Fulton Publishers (2000).

For a consideration of a range of approaches, including coaching, to the transfer and spread of innovative practice see:

Source: pp. 24-25 of Working Together: coaching and assessment for learning
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