

Essential teaching skills. Chris Kyriacou (2001). Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes Ltd.

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ISSN 1697-7467



Sometimes it is quite hard to find a book that really focuses upon the requirements a Primary teacher must have when teaching young learners. It is fortunate enough to have the opportunity in encountering a book that is written with the highest sensibility and from a very real point of view, far from long dissertations that can be boring and not very useful for most of us. In fact, it is a book that is directed not only to student teachers but also to experienced teachers who need to refresh their classroom techniques and are willing to experience new adventures. It is not solely directed to teachers of English but to anyone who has to deal with a group of students.

The book is divided into 8 chapters that deal with different topics that are regarded as important for the development of an effective teaching process.

In the first two chapters, *Developing your teaching skills* and *Planning and Preparation*, the author offers, for example, three important elements of skills: knowledge, decision making and action. The author also points out the

different competences to be developed during initial training and offers a list of essential teaching skills that are clearly the result of teaching experiences. He pays attention to the needs of learners, how to assess, when (how often), and the importance of lesson planning. Questions such as “Are my educational objectives for this lesson clear?” or “Have I adequately prepared pupils for this lesson, by alerting them in advance to any revision that may be required or other preparation they needed beforehand?” are clearly stated to offer the reader possibility of reflect about the procedures he/she follows when teaching.

In chapter 3, we should highlight the section devoted to matching work to pupil ability, how to cope with differentiation and mixed-ability groups and the use of resources and materials in class.

Chapters 4 and 5, related to Lesson Management, Classroom Climate and Discipline, show readers not only strategies to follow but also advises processes to make teaching easier, especially for new teachers and those still in training, how to manage different groups of

students or specific aspects such as pupil's movement and noise: "what may be acceptable to one teacher in one context may not be regarded as acceptable to another teacher in another context. Furthermore, problems over movement and noise can arise simply as a result of pupils being actively engaged in the tasks at hand and not because of any deliberate attempt by pupils to be troublesome". A general vision of motivation that can be useful to read is offered and different causes of pupil misbehaviour can be debated with student teachers in class. It also addresses questions such as if the feedback conveyed to pupils about their progress is helpful and constructive and if it encourages further progress will make the reader reflect about his classroom procedures.

In Chapter 7 the author deals with the difficulties any teacher may find when assessing his/her students. It provides student teachers a concise summary of the different types of assessment as well as offering different assessment activities in the classroom: homework, assessment tests designed by the teacher, standardised tests, formal examinations, etc.

Chapter 8 is devoted to Reflection and Evaluation, and this is something highly recommendable for our student teachers since they can see how important it is the fact of planning, organising and evaluating as well as being skilful and systematic when doing these. Professor Kyriacou offers different methods of data collection and proposes different ideas for reflection.

As it was said before, it is therefore obvious that the book offers detailed accounts and examples of basic teaching skills and techniques. Nonetheless it provides student teachers with an essential tool, highlighting the real aspects of teaching found in day to day classroom situations.