

A principle-led approach to initial teacher training

Professional development

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What's the idea?

Using guiding metacognitive principles as a basis for planning lessons, rather than topics and subject content, has potential to improve student motivation. This guide offers practical suggestions for embedding metacognition in the classroom, and the benefits which a small-scale study suggested this could bring

What does it mean?

The EEF (2018) find metacognition to be the most effective way in which schools and colleges can improve student progress, with a high amount of data supporting this view, and a relatively low cost of implementation.

In their research into initial teacher education, the DfE (2020) note that the most successful training providers value a depth of focus on key concepts rather than a superficial coverage of the teachers' standards, which can in less successful providers lead to a 'toolbox' approach.

Quigley and Stringer (2018) define metacognition for students as

requiring knowledge of themselves as learners, knowledge of appropriate strategies to employ, and knowledge of the task set. They argue that metacognition as a result of reviewing and monitoring their own understanding, then feeds in to their planning to improve their overall understanding going forwards.

How does it work in practice?

Introducing the eight guiding principles to classes, and referencing these, and how they would be developed each lesson, led to ongoing meaningful conversations around metacognition with my own groups.

By asking four trainee teachers to plan one lesson around a 'toolbox' approach to demonstrating each teaching standard, and a second, with the same group, around these eight principles, the benefits and drawbacks of each style of planning for trainee teachers and their students could be monitored.

The trainee teachers agreed the principles-based lesson was more enjoyable for students, for them to plan, and more effective in preparing students for life after college. The

only area where the standards-based lesson was preferred was in preparing students for formal assessments.

Students rated the principles-based lesson as more effective for each criterion by which it was measured. The principles-based lesson was rated most significantly ahead of the standards-based lesson in building students' intrinsic motivation in the subject concerned.

When the criteria by which the lessons would be judged were put to a vote for students and staff, the relative importance attached to building intrinsic motivation also had the biggest difference in perceived importance between the two groups. Students rated this as the most important criterion of all; for staff, it was seventh.

By planning more explicitly around metacognitive principles, the research suggests, we can improve trainee teachers' experience and also improve the learning experience for students – most significantly, in the area which they perceive as most important: building intrinsic motivation.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- Department for Education (DfE) (2020) Building Great Teachers? Initial Teacher Education Curriculum Research: Phase 2. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-education-curriculum-research/building-great-teachers> (accessed 23 April 2021).
- Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (2018) Teaching and Learning Toolkit. Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/%20teaching-learning-toolkit/> (accessed 23 April 2021).
- Quigley A and Stringer E (2018) Making Sense of Metacognition. Available at <https://impact.chartered.college/article/quigley-stringer-making-sense-metacognition/> (accessed 21 April 2021).

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