

# THE TRAINEE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

A COMPANION FOR INITIAL  
TEACHER TRAINING

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# 18

## Getting your first job

**In this chapter we will explore:**

- **when and how to apply for your first job;**
- **the application process;**
- **the 'golden rules' of interviews.**

### Introduction

When you are in the middle of your teacher training year, it is very easy to forget about anything that comes afterwards but getting your first job is a rite of passage that can get your teaching career off to a flying start. It is an exciting time for you and the good news is that, for the past few years, demand for new teachers in many parts of the country has exceeded supply so the majority of teachers are offered a job before the end of their course. The temptation, of course, is to apply for the first job you see but that can lead to you making a mistake. The recruitment process can be complex and you should think about your options at every stage. The right first job for you is something that you need to think hard about and the purpose of this chapter is to get you ready for this decision.

### Applying for your first job

During your teacher training it is likely that you will have been exposed to a number of different environments that will help you make your final decision about which job is right for you. For those of you in compulsory education, you would have completed placements in at least two contrasting organisations while those of you within post-compulsory education would have seen a great variety of teaching styles and locations to suit the needs of the wide range of subjects and students in this phase.

The key thing to remember when thinking about your first job is that everyone's needs are different. Sometimes it is easy to think that an 'outstanding' school in an affluent area would be a

better option than a school that people perceive as having a more challenging catchment area, yet that is not always the case. The pressures, demands and rewards in contrasting schools are often very different and so that is why it is very important to think about your needs before starting to apply for jobs.

Similar choices are needed within the post-compulsory education sector with choices to be made about whether your expertise is best suited to sixth form colleges, general FE colleges, pupil referral units, prison education, adult education or any one of the many other forms of education that exist in the sector.



Figure 18.1 Job interview

### Reflection

The purpose of this reflective feature is to get you to think about what you are looking for in your first job. For example, do you need to consider location, subject area or level of challenge?

Some things you may have considered are:

- **Geography.** Do you want to stay in the local area or are you willing to travel further afield? If you rely on public transport to get to work, are there any areas that you would need to avoid? Maybe consider other options such as working abroad or whether you would prefer somewhere closer to home.

- **Subject.** The next step is to identify the subject that you are going to put forward as your main subject. For some of you that will be easy, for example teachers of mathematics rarely teach any other subject, but for other subjects the choice is more complicated. A teacher of Business Studies is often asked to teach related subjects (for example IT or Economics) and so it is a good idea to think about what you would be able to offer.
- **Education phase.** For some people this is an easy choice. Most primary trained teachers work in that phase, but for other people the choice is trickier. While completing your teacher training you might have particularly enjoyed one or more age group and this will help inform your choice. A word of warning though: never apply for a phase if you have not experienced it. It is very easy to make assumptions and, aside from the difficulty you will have in explaining your lack of experience, you might find that your initial thoughts were incorrect.
- **Challenges.** Another factor to be aware of is the challenges you will face in each organisation and whether they will suit you or not. A high-performing school in an affluent area might seem like a more attractive option at first glance but there will be pressure on you to maintain results. A school or college serving a poorer area will have different challenges with teachers and lecturers coping with a lack of money and a variety of social problems.
- **Part time or full time.** This decision might be one that you are not able to make but for some people working part time at the start of their career represents a good way of easing themselves into the profession. This is especially true in the post-compulsory sector and represents a way of reducing the pressure that you have in your first year as a qualified professional.

## When to look for your first job

The majority of people try to make sure that they have a job by the end of their teacher training year so a good idea is to look out for things from Christmas onwards. Remember that most teachers are required to give a term's notice when leaving, so as a result, jobs for September will be advertised fairly early on.

Increasingly, jobs tend to be advertised online and so it is a good idea to set up an alert that will email you when jobs that meet your specification are posted. The *Times Educational Supplement* (either in print form every Friday or online at **tes.com**) is the longest established source of new jobs but do not neglect other sources of information. Schools and colleges will advertise vacancies on their own websites while other good sources include the *Guardian Education* supplement on Tuesday, **jobs.ac.uk** and also your own university's Twitter account.

## What to look for in a job advert

By now you should have a clear idea about the type of job and the location of the job that you want. However, it is always a good idea to take a very close look at the job advertisement before applying to save disappointment later. Make sure that you are applying for a role that is suitable for a newly qualified teacher and check to see if it is a fixed-term contract or whether it is open ended. Other things to check are whether it is full time or proportional (often expressed as a decimal, so one where you teach half a standard timetable would be described as a 0.5 post) and also if there are any additional responsibilities attached to the job.



Figure 18.2 Job hunter

### Activity

Select a job advertisement from one of the sources that are listed above. Make sure that it is a job that suits your skills.

Before looking at the advertisement in detail spend some time thinking about how you view your role and come up with a few words that describe your philosophical approach to teaching - what are your key values and beliefs and how do you see your role? When you have done this, set this to one side and look again at the advertisement.

Highlight the qualities requested in the advert and then separate them into personal and professional. Reflect on whether you match those qualities and also whether the words mentioned in the recruitment advertisement match those of your own beliefs. Remember that it is not about getting a job, it is about getting the right job, and if your belief structure does not match that of the organisation then you might struggle.

If there is a match then this would be a job that you might think about applying for.

## The application process

When most schools and colleges were controlled by the local education authority, the application process was relatively straightforward. A common application form was used and a lot of the information could be transferred if more than one application was needed. Sadly, this is now no



longer the case and so it is difficult to generalise about the processes although there are a few general rules which you should follow when applying.

## The personal statement

There is an art to writing a personal statement for a teaching job and, once mastered, they should not take too long to complete. One golden rule is to make sure that you don't just use a generic statement for each application – make sure that each statement is tailored for the specific job and you reflect on the qualities the advertisement asks for.

The structure of the statement tends to be fairly standard so it is a good idea to follow these steps:

- **The introduction.** Make sure that you give your reasons for wanting to teach at the school or college. Be specific and show that you have done your research – look at the organisation's website, Ofsted report and any other information you can find and convey your enthusiasm and motivation for the job. Remember not to write what you think they want to hear, write your real reasons: you want to be selected on who you are rather than who you pretend to be.
- **Knowledge and understanding.** The next section allows you to match your own knowledge and understanding to that of the person specification. As with any application process, it is vital to ensure that you cover all aspects of the person specification and it is also vital to show how you have matched each aspect, so make sure that you give lots of examples. As well as that, it is a good idea to include some comments showing your philosophy. Schools and colleges are looking for people who can work independently from early on, so show that you understand the role of the teacher and make sure that you give concise examples to illustrate this understanding.
- **About yourself.** Once you have addressed the key aspects of the job, make sure that you include information about yourself. A good idea is to outline your personal and professional qualities concisely and demonstrate how these link to working in education. Another part to include is to note whether you have any additional skills which could be useful either in the class or in extra-curricular activities – these could include speaking another language, sport, music or art.
- **Conclusion.** Do not forget to include a conclusion in your personal statement. Too many applicants end their statement abruptly and this disrupts the flow. Conclude in a way that will make the person reading the application want to interview you and make sure you say why you are an excellent candidate for the job.

Once you have written the personal statement, put it away for a day or two and then read it again. This makes it much easier to spot any errors or mistakes that might detract from the application. Make sure that you check all spelling and grammar and check on the flow of the statement. Reading it aloud helps you focus on what you have written and whether it flows in a satisfactory manner.



Figure 18.3 Yoga

### Activity

Once you have read the previous section, go back to your original advertisement and go through the process of writing a personal statement for the job. When you have finished show it to someone who you feel will be constructively critical, discuss it and by the end of the process you should have a personal statement that you can use as a model in the future.

## The golden rules of the interview process

The final section of this chapter provides a few golden rules to follow once you have heard that you have been called for interview.

1. **Contact the school or college to arrange a visit.** Schools tend to do this as a matter of course although it is more unusual in colleges. When you visit, make sure you ask lots of questions and listen to the answers. Get a feel for the organisation and picture yourself working there. Be honest with yourself, if you don't like the place when you visit, then think seriously about whether this is the right job for you.
2. **Prepare for the interview.** By that we don't just mean organise your micro-teach or presentation – instead learn everything you can about the organisation and be ready to ask questions.



Figure 18.4 Golden rules

3. **Show off your teaching skills when invited to do a micro-teach.** Read the brief carefully and prepare something that is interactive and innovative. Do not do too much teacher-talk but instead remember everything you have learnt about structuring active lessons – show off your great teaching skills!
4. **Be organised.** Plan your route to the interview before the day and aim to arrive early. That way you will be far more relaxed than if you turn up at the last minute. Make sure that you are appropriately dressed for the job and that you have all the materials you need if presenting anything. A good idea is to bring two memory sticks and paper copies of any presentations, just in case of any problems.
5. **Whatever the outcome, learn from the experience.** Education is a small world and the way you are in one interview is likely to impact on your next one. Thank everyone at the end of the day for their time and if you are unsuccessful then always ask for feedback. Sometimes the reasons behind not being chosen are minor and relate to something that you can change next time.

Finally . . . good luck with the job hunting and remember to focus on getting the RIGHT job for your needs.

## Things to think about

The key message from this chapter is that job searching requires a great deal of thought and preparation. Before applying, it is important that you are clear in your head as to what sort of job you want, where it would ideally be and what you will be teaching. Think about this early on in the course and start to plan. What steps can you put in place to ensure you take a structured approach to your job search?

# In a nutshell

This feature covers the essentials of getting your first job and will help you to think about applying it to your own practice. This resource can be photocopied and used as a revision tool or a prompt for discussion with your peers.

## Hattie and micro-teaching

Hattie's (2012) study of what works in teaching remains highly influential and one of the techniques he advocated was 'micro-teaching'. This is the name given to a short teaching session, normally designed to achieve a single objective. Many interviews will ask you to complete a micro-teach and it remains an excellent way of showing your teaching skills.

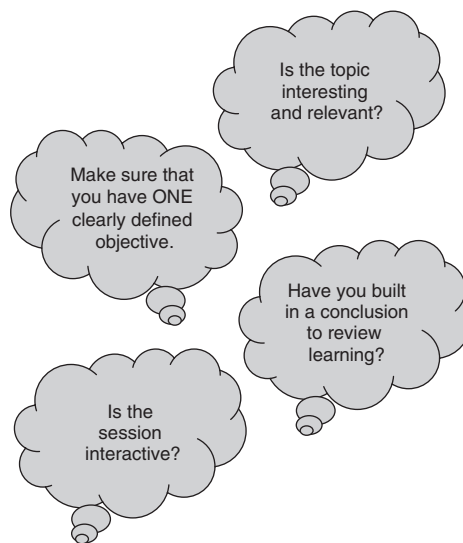
Hattie (2012) suggests that the key points of a good micro-teach session are that the topic should be an interesting one, the objective clear and singular, active learning should be used and there should be time for reflection.

These points can be used as a guideline when designing a session. Using an andragogical approach (in other words, using knowledge that is already within the brains of students) can be highly beneficial and can help give students confidence to complete the task.

Knowing how much time is allocated is an important skill as one of the main problems for teachers is making sure that you fit everything in and avoid doing too much.

## Putting it into practice

When designing your micro-teach think about the following:



## Suggestions for further reading

The best suggestion we can give you for further reading is to make sure that you read the *Times Educational Supplement* every week as well as the education pages in the *Guardian*.

## References

**Hattie, J** (2012) *Visible Learning for Teachers*. Abingdon: Routledge.

# 19

## The start of your professional journey

**In this chapter we will explore:**

- **making the most of your NQT year;**
- **taking control of your own continuous professional development;**
- **progressing within your career.**

### Introduction

Starting your first teaching job is an exciting time and the first year can pass in a bit of a blur if you don't plan ahead and remember to take a look around from time to time.

This chapter is designed to help this process. It has been split into three separate sections and these represent the three stages of your career. The first stage is the newly qualified teacher (NQT) year: in effect this is when you are starting out in your career and will generally take you one year to complete (if you work part-time then it will take a little longer). It is your final hurdle to clear as you become a fully qualified teacher. The second stage looks at your professional development in the first few years of your career. This is when you are testing your wings, taking some risks and taking control to steer your career in the right direction for you. Finally, we will look at the slightly longer term – by now you will be flying high as your confidence builds and we will consider options for promotion.

### Making the most of your NQT year

The newly qualified teacher year (normally abbreviated to NQT year) is a period of three terms which act as your induction into the profession in the compulsory education sector. It bridges the divide between your training and your career in teaching and is a great opportunity for you to learn more about the profession.

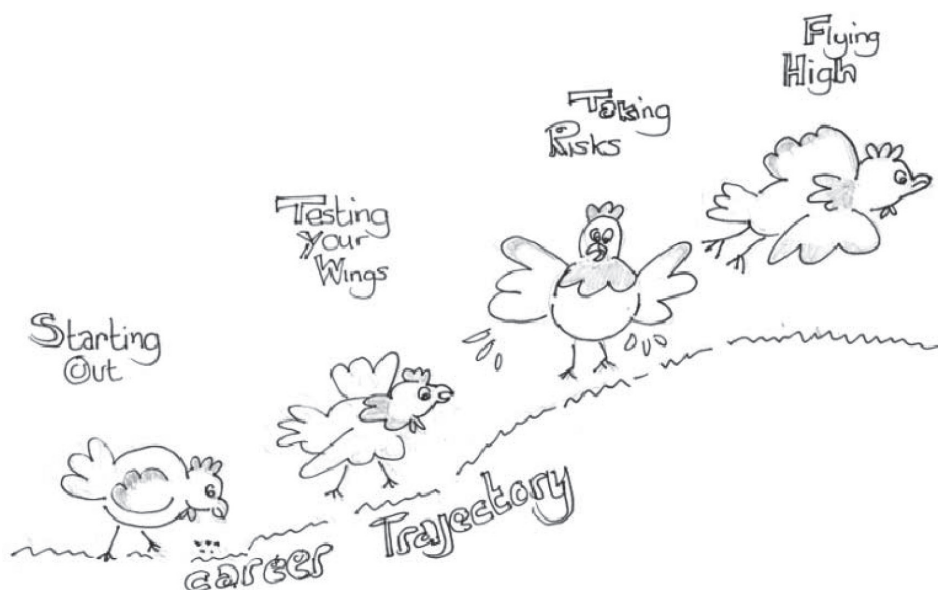


Figure 19.1 Career trajectory

After completing your teacher training qualification, you will need to complete the NQT year in order to gain fully qualified teacher status. This can be completed in any maintained school, independent school (including academies and free schools), nursery schools and even some independent schools overseas. The only thing to note is that you cannot complete it in any school that has received a 'Special Measures' judgement in its most recent Ofsted inspection. Once you have completed the year, you are free to practise in any maintained school as a fully qualified member of staff.

During your first year, you will be teaching a slightly reduced timetable (generally 90 per cent of a standard timetable) and will be supported if you are given additional non-teaching responsibilities. This means that you will have (a little) extra time to reflect and to complete the year. The year can be stressful, but there is always a lot of extra support available. A key part of this support is regular observations with a mentor who will be able to help you reflect on your learning and think about how to improve. This is an important part of the year as at the end of each term you will be assessed and targets will be set based on your progress.

You are only allowed one attempt at completing your first year and at the end of the year the head teacher will make a recommendation as to whether you pass or not. Remember that if you do not pass, you will not be able to practise as a qualified teacher in any maintained school so it is really important that if you have got any concerns about the process, you discuss them as soon as possible.

Within the post-compulsory education sector, the first year is treated in a rather different manner. There is no formal NQT procedure, but many organisations will have a probation year which runs along similar lines to the compulsory sector. There is no guarantee of a reduced timetable – this very much depends on the employing organisation – so that may add a level of stress initially. The same rules apply to this sector in terms of completing the initial probationary year so it is important to try to make the most of it and use every source of support you can to enable you to develop your

professional practice. It is also important to note that the decision as to whether you receive the equivalent of QTS (QTLS – Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills) is not a recommendation from the organisation but it something you need to apply for through a separate organisation. Currently this is through the Education and Training Foundation which has a very informative website ([et-foundation.co.uk](http://et-foundation.co.uk)) but please note that things change quickly in this phase of English education, so check with your tutors or mentor if you have any questions.



Figure 19.2 NQT

### Activity

Reflecting on your own strengths and weaknesses is important for all teachers, especially new ones. It is easy, at the end of your teacher training year, to relax a little bit but rather than taking the whole summer off, spend time reflecting on your professional practice and before you start the year think about:

- things about the job that you believe you do well;
- things about the job that you believe you can do better;
- parts of the job that you will have to do that will be new to you.

Once you have thought about this, start to construct an action plan which will include sources of support and a timeline to help you put in place support for areas of weakness.

### Surviving the NQT year – a five-point plan

You will be given lots of advice about how to survive your first year but the most important things are to keep working hard, keep reflecting on how you are doing and keep using all the sources of support available to you. In addition, this five-point plan might be useful to you.

### Point one – learn how to say no!



Figure 19.3 Say no

Be very careful about any extra responsibilities that you take on at the start of your career. Your priority should be to pass the year and so anything else should not intrude on this. When you are in a new job, it is very easy to say yes to everything and although that will show how keen you are, it is very easy to become overloaded and unable to complete all the tasks that you have set yourself. This is where your plan that you completed in the earlier activity comes into its own – stick to it!

### Point two – marking time

If you ask any teacher about the part of the job that takes the most time, and often causes the most stress, they will talk about the marking burden. Sometimes it feels relentless but it is vital that you stay on top of it and do not fall behind. We have talked in Chapter 2 about time management and making sure you have enough marking time is likely to be a key part of your time management. Allocate some dedicated time each day to marking and if you do feel as though you are struggling with this, ask others for tips on managing the load. There are some very good and very valid ways of getting students to peer mark and even self-mark some pieces that they complete, so if the process allows for this flexibility, it might be a consideration.

### Point three – don't allow the job to take over

This is easier said than done but it is vital that you do not allow the job to become your entire life. Teaching is often seen as a vocation rather than a job and although it is important that you do the job to the best of your ability, it is very important to make sure that you have some time away from it all. Use your diary to block out 'me' time and do not neglect friends and family. It can be tempting to continue working, even when too tired, but it is far better to stop when you are tired, do something you enjoy and then come back to it. You will feel refreshed and be more productive.





Figure 19.4 Taking over

#### **Point four – ask for help**

You are not on your own in the school. Although it will sometimes feel as though everyone is madly rushing around in their own world, there are plenty of sources of support and it is important to use them. Everyone goes through ups and downs when teaching so there will be people who know exactly how you feel about the job and will be able to support you, offer advice or just listen while you talk through the problems you are facing.

#### **Point five – celebrate successes**

Whether it be your own successes or those of your students, make sure you celebrate what has been achieved. The feeling of pride when a student achieves something never leaves you as a teacher and it is important to make sure that you enjoy the good times. Consider putting up a success board or alternatively sharing good news in staff meetings.

## **Taking control of your continuous professional development**

Developing as a professional is a vital skill to have and the lessons learnt during your teacher training can be used to good effect when deciding on your goals for your professional development. Sometimes there is a tendency to rely on the centrally organised days for support but it is often a good idea to ensure that you develop your own, personalised programme of CPD.



Figure 19.5 Celebrate success

One of the most important parts of any CPD programme is to identify the impact it has had on your professional practice. Sometimes this can be difficult to measure but it is a good idea to try as you will then see what works and what doesn't. The exercise below is designed to get you to think about the impact CPD can have and how you start to think about what difference it can make.

### Reflection

Think about the following popular CPD activities and reflect on how you can tell if they have had any impact on your own teaching. This doesn't always have to be a change in quantifiable terms sometimes it could instead be intangible changes:

- a meeting to look at the new syllabus for your subject;
- a behaviour management seminar;
- a demonstration of new software designed to help with the teaching of a complex topic;
- a review of the homework policy.

You will find that there are a lot of CPD opportunities for teachers. Some of these will be internal to the school or college (known as INSET within compulsory education) while others will be external and either subject-specific or deal with generic topics. Finding the best CPD for you can be difficult but below are a few tips that will help you select what to aim for.

### Make sure that the CPD will have a direct impact on your teaching

At the start of your career, your main focus should be on improving your professional practice and making sure that everything you do impacts on this. This means that you should look for CPD that will either improve areas you have for development or alternatively will help you solidify a strength. Look for testimonials from colleagues and ask if any materials will be provided that you can use.

### Think about what you are looking to get out of the CPD

A key part of CPD is knowing what you want to get out of it – which isn't quite as simple as it seems! Initially it might be useful to use a model to structure your CPD like the one in Figure 19.6 below. This model has been adapted from Girvan *et al.* (2016) and is based on an experiential approach. The suggestion is that a starting point is to observe your learners as this will give an insight into the development need and the potential impact of it. This is followed by participating in the learning in order to get an 'insider view', something which allows you to experience what your learners will experience. This provides experience on which you can plan developments, think about how you might achieve them and finally refine your ideas into realistic actions. The model concludes with reflection on action to consider any further developments.



Figure 19.6 CPD

Sometimes one of the benefits of CPD is simply being away from your normal work environment as this can help refresh your mind and give you new ideas, but it is important to remember that useful CPD should have an impact, so have an objective and outline activities that will help you to achieve it.

### All together now

Attending CPD events is a great way of meeting people and networking among fellow teachers. It is very easy to get into a set routine when you are teaching and meeting people who teach the same subject will often invigorate your teaching. Sometimes merely talking through the fact that you have the same problems within the classroom can help but in a lot of cases it is good to hear about different and innovative solutions to problems.

### Follow-up after the event

Remember to see CPD as an ongoing process rather than a series of one-off events. When you get back to your school or college, try out what you have learnt from the training and see if it improves your professional practice. Don't lose touch with the people you have met either – sharing good practice should be a lifelong process!

#### Activity

Put together a time chart for your CPD. This is an easy thing to do - all you need is a calendar and potential dates for activities. Each half term have one objective and select CPD that would help you achieve this objective. Add your school or college internal events and your chart will give you the complete picture of your annual CPD.

## Progressing within your career

Finally, we will look at planning your career. The objective is to get you thinking about taking on more responsibilities. Many people are quite happy teaching classes and passing on their knowledge of the subject without taking on additional tasks, but should you want to, there are plenty of opportunities for career advancement within schools and colleges. Below we look at three possibilities.

### Taking a management role

In all but the smallest organisations, there will be the opportunity to take on more responsibilities and perhaps advance your career within your subject. Most schools and colleges will have a designated person who acts as the head of subject and within this role it is often possible to guide the direction of the subject and put in place your ideas to improve teaching and learning. Within schools these roles will have a significant teaching load which makes it a busy job but keeps

you in touch with what is happening in the classroom. On the other hand, in colleges it is often a non-teaching role which (in theory) gives you more time, but does mean that your connection with the classroom is broken.

From the role of head of department, it may be possible to expand your role and start to manage other areas. The majority of principals and head teachers started as teachers and worked their way up in this manner.

## Taking a cross-organisational role

Within education organisations there will be a number of cross-organisational roles which might appeal to you. Some are likely to move you away from your subject (such as taking the role of SENCO – Special Educational Needs Coordinator) while others will allow you to continue to teach your specialised subject but will also let you share knowledge across the organisation (an example of this might be a head of teaching and learning).

These roles can be interesting, if challenging, and in most cases will require extra time studying which will be done alongside your teaching.

## Taking a role outside your organisation

The other possibility is to take a role that takes you outside the organisation. Most subjects have professional bodies attached to them and a role within one of these can introduce you to new ideas. Researching and writing about your subject can also afford you a different perspective on the subject and, while all these roles do take time, they can be very rewarding.

### Reflection

Think about what you would like to be doing in three, five and ten years' time. This is not an exact science but it will give you some idea as to how to manage your career. You might be happy being a class teacher for the duration of your career but if you do want to take on extra responsibilities then it is a good idea to think about it as early on in your career as possible.

## Things to think about

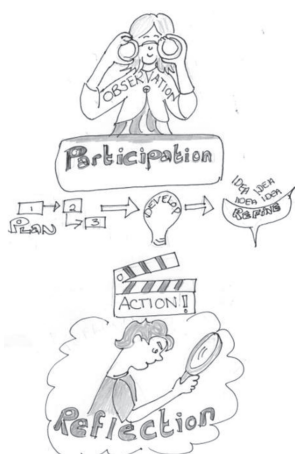
Continuous professional development is a very individual process and is one that should constantly be in your mind. As you have been working through the previous chapters, we have been trying to get you to think about your own strengths, areas for development and also new areas for you to explore as a new teacher. One way of doing this is to keep a reflective journal – this will allow you to log your thoughts and ideas as you go along and will be something that you can look back on in the future for inspiration.

# In a nutshell

This feature covers the essentials relating to the start of your professional journey and will help you to think about applying it to your own practice. This resource can be photocopied and used as a revision tool or a prompt for discussion with your peers.

## Models of CPD

A key part of CPD is understanding what you want to get out of it. The following model (adapted from Girvan *et al.* 2016) suggests a starting point of observation of learners, followed by participation (in order to 'live' the learning experience), then planning, developing and refining ideas for action. This model concludes with reflection on action to consider any further developments.



Source: Girvan *et al.* (2016).

## Putting it into practice

Identify a CPD course that you are going to attend in the near future, then go through the steps below:

1. Identify the objectives that you are trying to achieve.
2. Go on the course and try out the techniques or resources that you are going to be using. Think about it from the perspective of the student – what are the strengths, weaknesses, problems?
3. Apply the CPD lessons in your own classroom and see how it works. Remember to get feedback as you go along.
4. Reflect on the success (or otherwise) of the CPD.
5. Refer back to the original objective to see if it has been achieved.

If this works for you, use the same approach in the future.

## Suggestions for further reading

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