

Chrissy Finn

Book title: 50 Quick Ways to Outstanding Teaching

Author: Mike Gershon

Publication date: 2014

The review

1. What is your overall impression of the book?

This book is intended to provide teachers with practical ideas, strategies and techniques to improve practice, raise attainment and engage students in lessons. The book is purposefully set out in bite-size chunks that can be dipped, quite quickly, in and out of. For the busy teacher, it is an excellent tool. The tips are set out with individual titles such as, 'Circulate', 'Make Failure Great' and 'Do Not Fear Noise'. They are all nicely set out in a contents page so it is easy to select areas you feel you would like tips on or, indeed, to locate concepts and ideas you had perhaps never considered, and jump straight to that section. Tips are meaningful, yet concise.

2. Who do you think would benefit most from reading the book? What will they learn?

The advice in this book is targeted at all teachers, at every key stage, who want practical advice to improve their practice, and improve student engagement and outcomes. Readers will learn how to improve in the key areas of behaviour management, classroom management, creating and delivering engaging lessons, setting and reflecting on targets, building relationships and making knowledge stick! Gershon claims 'the tips will help you to teach brilliant lessons over and over again.'

3. What did you think about the quality of the writing? Please consider the tone, structure and ideas. Does it suit the audience?

The book is incredibly easy reading. Each tip is succinct and would take no more than a couple of minutes to read. You certainly could read this book cover to cover, however as the tips are so wide-ranging, covering various areas of practice, I would recommend this book as a tool to use as and when you need it or as a starting point to further research and development. Gershon intends the book to be a quick and easy guide, and he achieves this.

4. Please discuss the research used to underpin the ideas. What evidence does the author use? Is it robust and up-to-date?

The author does not cite particular research in this book but makes it clear that his tips are tried and tested methods. Gershon is a teacher trainer himself who has written many similar guides and more in depth volumes. He is also a teaching and learning consultant and creates CPD resources for TES PRO. This book could be considered a good starting point to seek out further research on his methods.

5. What did you learn from reading the book? What ideas/approaches/practice will you change or adopt as a result of reading this book?

The areas that stood out for me were the tips on creating fun and even noisy lessons! On the other hand, Gershon also advocates more traditional methods such as repetition, repetition, repetition. One conclusion I have reached from reading this book is that flexibility, taking risks, trying different things, and incorporating more variety and excitement into your planning will keep students engaged and interested, and to help them to truly absorb what is being taught.

6. Could you share a quote from the book that particularly resonated with you?

'It is not always possible to make lessons fun...sometimes it is necessary to be quiet and focussed. At the same time, injecting fun on a regular basis can have a good effect on your pupils. You can inject fun by using exciting activities, through humour, through variety, through challenges or games, through use of drama...and, also, through engaging and inspirational questions or lesson aims' (Mike Gerson, 2014).