

BOOK REVIEW



Book review	50 Tips for Teacher Development
Author	Jack C. Richards
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The Cambridge Pocket Edition series continues with this book for teacher educators. Penny Ur fitted 100 teaching tips into the pages allotted by the series editor, but this book needs twice the space for each tip. In the introduction “Why I wrote this book” Richards refers to everyone’s need for “regular opportunities to update our professional knowledge and skills” (p. viii). He also points out that the book’s activities include some that need the support of an institution plus others that teachers can do on their own. It is a good balance.

As his readers will know, Richards is a prolific writer yet one who always has something fresh to say. The 50 tips are grouped into twelve sections, starting with “Review your professional development” (Tips 1-4) and ending with an outward focus in “Share your knowledge and skills” (Tips 45-50). Although there is a logical sequence to these sections, readers could also dip into particular topics that interest them via the Table of Contents or the two-page index.

Each section starts with a brief sentence or two explaining its rationale. Then the tips open with a title in the form of an imperative as in Tip 6’s “Observe how you use questions”, followed by the purpose of the tip: “Observe the kinds of questioning strategies used in teaching”. Next, a paragraph summaries advice before inviting reflection through questions. Some tips are illustrated by italicized first person anecdotes from teachers and some end with a reference or two for further reading, in place of a final list of references. From here on the word limits of a book review help me avoid simply summarizing each tip. Instead my attempt is to give a sense of the book’s flavour.

The first three tips set a foundation for the rest, with the invitations to plan ahead by setting goals (Tip 1) and to look backwards by reviewing both one's professional development (Tip 2) and one's changes in teaching (Tip 3). These latter two illustrate the book's focus on ongoing rather than pre-service professional development and may send readers to nostalgic reflections on their early careers. (Speaking of early careers, the back cover has a photograph of the author in 1973 with a group of Indonesian students.)

Section 2 has the suggestion to "Find out how you teach" by various means such as listening to one's own teaching or keeping a journal. In Section 3, "Observe the nature of lessons", one suggestion (Tip 11) prepares readers to observe other people teaching, including designing a form which looks for features that can be observed rather than those that depend on inference. If developing one's own observation form doesn't appeal, there's a ready-made three-page example in Appendix 3.

The so-far largely teacher-focused emphasis moves in the fourth section to the learners, with the reminder that "Learning is not necessarily the mirror image of teaching" (p. 26). Using a reading class as an example, Tip 12 generates questions which could elicit information about students' reading choices, methods and difficulties. Based on their answers the teacher can plan activities and materials that address the course aims. Tip 13 suggests choosing a metaphor to describe teachers' classroom roles: architect or builder, friend or manager and so on. The reflective emphasis of Tip 15 mirrors advice from a number of writers, including most recently Farrell's (2017) on reflection about critical incidents. Two first person accounts from a recent in-service course were a reminder that when Richards speaks about professional development he is drawing on his current experience.

Tips 16-18 underline the need to review our classroom language. Since entire books have been written on the topic, the tips can address only small examples. Tip 16 is about how we ask classroom questions and Tip 17 is about giving feedback. Tip 18 shows ways of examining classroom language in general through analyzing lesson transcripts.

Critical reflection returns as the heading of the next section, Tips 19-22. As a sign of how much more there is to say on this topic, three of the four tips have additional references. Tip 22, "Try doing something differently" includes an idea that could be expanded for in-service courses focusing on lesson planning. Why not reverse the usual order of the traditional PPP plan by starting with production and ending with presentation? He avoids the educational jargon of inductive and deductive approaches.

Tips 23-26 in the seventh section are for people interested in expanding their professional knowledge. The advice includes taking part in a reading group, a language teachers' association or a conference as well as learning from an expert. Then Tip 24 suggests conducting a focused interview with an expert teacher, for which some questions are suggested.

Tips 27-30 are grouped under the heading "Develop research skills". These will be of particular interest to tertiary based teachers who are encouraged to do more than classroom teaching.



Looking ahead to Tips 36-40, if teachers decide to research their own teaching there are five helpful tips, one being an extension of the earlier reference to classroom language with “Monitor your teacher talking time (TTT)” in Tip 38.

The final two sections encourage teachers to broaden their horizons: “Create an institutional professional development culture” and finally “Share your knowledge and skills”. How might teachers do this? There are suggestions for planning a workshop, for making presentations and, for anyone willing for a longer commitment, for becoming a mentor.

Why do I believe this book will sell well? At a recent international conference the bookstand had a large pile of copies on Day One. By the last day, the pile had gone and there was an offer to get hold of the book and send it on to buyers.

THE REVIEWER

Marilyn Lewis is a New Zealander who enjoys keeping herself professionally updated in her retirement through reading and through working with practising teachers and language learners in different parts of the world. She also finds that co-writing books and articles is a good way to keep engaged.
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REFERENCES

- Farrell, T. (2017). *Reflecting on critical incidents*. London, England: Bloomsbury.
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