



TESEP in Practice The 3E Approach

Dr Keith Smyth TESEP Expert Group

The overall aim of TESEP project is to draw up on existing good practice in FE and HE to investigate how current and emerging technologies can underpin a truly learner-centred teaching approach. Two simple assumptions are driving this aim.

- The first assumption is that to make a real difference to the student experience, we must involve students in increasingly active, self-directed learning from an early stage in their studies.
- The second is that technology, when it is used appropriately, can play a very important role in this process, particularly where students locate material, undertake formative assessment and, critically, where effective collaborative working and critical discussion with peers is to occur.

TESEP Teaching Principles

TESEP is about striving to **transform** the student experience which should ultimately lead to improvements in engagement, achievement and retention. The teaching principles that TESEP advocates as good practice for achieving this can be summarised as follows.

- **Ensure that every learner is as active as possible.** Start by thinking about designing learning tasks that address the question: *how can we challenge students to think more deeply about what it is they are learning?* Once you have designed the learning tasks, you should only then start thinking about the resources needed. TESEP expects that many of these can be found online.
- **Design frequent formative assessment.** Encourage the learner to test their developing understanding or skills frequently and ensure that they get feedback and guidance as quickly as possible - this should include feedback from peers.
- **Put emphasis on peers learning together** (building a learning community). Consider whether, in your unit or course, you can create small groups who will work together to produce something – a report, a lesson, a demonstration. Consider whether the groups can then teach other groups about their chosen topic. Try to engender a sense of ownership and achievement in your class.
- **Consider whether learning tasks can be personalised** by allowing the individual student, or a small group, choice over exactly what is to be achieved? Negotiate with the learners wherever possible. Aim for project-based, resource-based, discussion-based learning – not direct instruction.

The 'ideal' conclusion from these principles would be to have students who take responsibility for how they learn in a way that reflects the responsibilities they will ultimately have in the professional environment. The aim is to put '**learners in control**' and '**empower**' every student to become an effective learner.

TESEP in Practice: Enhancing - Extending – Empowering

So how might these TESEP teaching principles be implemented in practice and what are the implications for the tutor who is seeking to transform the student experience through making changes in their teaching approach that involve the good use of technology?

TESEP proposes that the process of changing teaching practice in order to transform the student experience is an iterative one and that it is possible to implement the TESEP principles in a number of ways that effectively represent different 'degrees' or 'stages' of transformation.

It is suggested that three broad stages of transformation can usefully be identified, with each having different implications for teaching practice, how technology might be used and for the roles and responsibilities of the learner.

Enhance: Making simple and often subtle adjustments to teaching practice, involving straightforward but effective uses of technology and structured peer support opportunities, could result in an improved and more active experience for the student.

Extend: Developing a blended approach, involving the use of online tools and resources for collaborative and individual tasks, that is always at least partially student-led, can be introduced to offer new opportunities for learning or to extend classroom activities in ways that provide more choice and control in what, when and how students learn.

Empower: The teaching approach taken in a unit or course can be re-designed so that learning is driven from the outset, as much as possible, by the needs and interests of the learner within a framework of support that is established by the tutor in a primarily guiding role, and where technology is used to offer independence and autonomy in learning.

As is hopefully apparent, each of three E stages can be seen as involving an increasing amount of learner ownership and control, with the Empower stage essentially representing the TESEP 'ideal'.

However, in accepting that the transformation process is an iterative one, it should be stressed that changes in teaching practice at any of the stages identified are of equally value. It must also be recognised that the level at which changes in teaching practice are possible will at least partly depend on the specific teaching context (eg students, subject and level, tutor experience, etc).

As regards the student, each of the transformational stages is seen as implying a different kind of role for the student to play. At the **Enhance** level, the student is viewed as being more actively involved in their learning experience and having a greater degree of responsibility for their learning than would normally be associated with classroom delivered courses. At the **Extend** level the student is seen to become an engaged learner - they move from an active to more of a pro-active position and are required to make at least some key decisions about the nature of the activities they are to undertake. Finally at the **Empower** level, the student is required to be autonomous, assuming almost full control of their independent and collaborative learning in a way that reflects the responsibility they will ultimately have in the professional environment.

Consistent with the principles of TESEP, collaborative learning between students is viewed as critical and should be supported wherever possible. At a minimum, for example at the Enhance level, collaborative learning could be enabled through peer support opportunities, such as study groups or online forums where students are expected to assist one another with questions and issues. However, more purposeful collaboration would tend to be supported by group work and other kinds of student-led activities, which would be indicative of teaching practice at the Extend and Empower levels. The greater the degree of choice a group of students has in determining the nature of the collaborative tasks they are to undertake, and how to undertake them, the further towards being more empowered, autonomous learners they are likely to be.

The TESEP 3E Approach, as it is presented above, provides a few illustrative examples of the kinds of learning tasks that might be associated with teaching and learning at the Enhance, Extend and Empower stages. Many of these examples involve the use of educational technology. As previously alluded to, many of the principles TESEP advocates can be implemented without the use of technology. However the TESEP project, being concerned with how technology can help to enable learning, proposes that technology can very effectively support learner-centered approaches and often in ways that are difficult or even impossible to do in the traditional classroom setting.

When the illustrative task examples are read left to right, you'll see that the diagram tries to indicate how similar kinds of tasks might be implemented at each stage. The intention here is to illustrate that it is possible to start fairly simply, and then take incremental steps towards doing something perhaps a little more sophisticated. It is also intended to illustrate that you may start from a different place in relation to different kinds of tasks, depending upon what you already do within your teaching.

Important Notes on the TESEP 3E Approach

In considering the 3E approach, and what it generally indicates about the kinds of changes to teaching practice that can begin to transform the student experience, the following additional points should be kept in mind.

1. Although the 3E stages can be seen as a continuum of change in teaching practice, they should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. In any single course context, there may be a range of learning tasks and activities that align with different stages of the approach.
2. Similarly, although the 3E approach is most likely to be applied to a unit, module or other course context, it can equally be applied to a single activity, part of a unit or module, or even at a programme level where common approaches are used across a set of modules.
3. In being part of a continuum the 3E stages are not clearly distinct categories, as it is to be expected that some applications of the TESEP approach will blur the boundaries between one stage and another. This point perhaps applies particularly at the Enhance and Extend levels, and maybe less so at the Empower level.
4. Although the Empower level represents the TESEP ideal, an important part of the TESEP project's philosophy is that tutors will start from and end up at different points on the 3E continuum in terms of changing their practice in a particular teaching context.

If the tutor is doing a lot of work at the Extend level, then aiming for the Empower level in some aspects of what they do would be very worthwhile. However, if a tutor wants to begin by enhancing several aspects of what they already do, then that is an equally valuable step in transforming current teaching practice.

5. Classroom to fully online? In terms of technology use, although Enhance represents simple adjustments to existing practice, and Extend a more purposively blended approach, Empower does not imply fully online. Although practice at the Empower level could result in fully online courses, with the ethos of TESEP partly being about uses of technology that are appropriate to the tutor, students, subject and context in question, then fully online learning is not the desired end-point for effective transformation of practice.

The Pedagogical Principles for TESEP

TESEP is based on a 'social constructivist' view of learning – which means that the teacher should primarily act as a facilitator and guide rather than a deliverer of information, and that peers will influence an individual's approach to learning at least as much as the teacher. The approach is based on the idea that teaching by telling doesn't really work, and that the most effective learning is achieved by students doing something active.

To find out more about the principles behind TESEP refer to:

TESEP – The Pedagogical Principles by Professor Terry Mayes which can be accessed on the Transform website – www.napier.ac.uk/transform.