

**'TEACHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT': A SESSION PLAN FOR TEACHER DEVELOPMENT**

Bryan Robinson  
University of Granada

Teacher training divides into neat packages of 'Content' and 'Techniques', but finally it is the individual who puts all this into practice. How can she assimilate this input and take full possession of it, really make it hers, rather than something 'borrowed'? In this session plan I explore one way of approaching this goal.

INTRODUCTION

The starting point for this workshop is my belief that much teacher training input, received through seminars, conferences, jornadas, and the like, goes 'in one ear' and comes 'out the other' with very little - if anything at all - happening in the middle. I personally have led training sessions billed as offering '25 ways of working with ...' and these make me wonder about their influence. The teachers who attend this type of session undoubtedly feel they are worthwhile at the time: the sessions have an immediate pay-off value as participants each have their 25 recipes to take home with them. When they return to their schools they start working their way down the list, using the activities which

best suit their needs. However, more often than not, the feedback I have received later on is that these recipes fail to satisfy. Teachers say that they don't 'work' for them, in their schools, with their learners, as well as they remember they worked for the presenter of the workshop.

Now, if we believe that our learners in the classroom sometimes need time to assimilate what they have learned; time to filter the input in such a way as to accommodate it into their current level of comprehension of the language, then shouldn't we allow ourselves the same sort of 'filter-building' time before using the output drawn from a teacher training session?

In the first phase of this session plan I give participants the time to work through a number of activities in order to construct 'filters' with which to review the recent input they have received. The second phase builds on the first, by offering participants an exercise in goal-setting as a means of showing how to use their dreams, fantasies and ideals, drawn from the filtered input, in a practical operation looking to the achievement of one of their goals over the forthcoming three or four months.

#### SESSION PLAN - PHASE 1.

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PHASE 2.

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breathing and breath-movement coordination exercises drawn directly or indirectly from different schools of yoga. Most of these can be found in Agosta (1988).

Step 2. Present participants with these sentence stems (MULLIGAN, 1988):

I should (not) ...

I must (not) ...

I have/ought to ...

They each draw up a list of the messages they have received from their recent experiences of teacher training input by completing these stems.

Step 3. Participants try to identify the *voice*<sup>1</sup> behind each of the statements they have written. In one group, some said that it was their own voice; others identified the voices of teachers and teacher trainers they had worked with; one named the author of a book he had been reading. These sentences are then left on one side as participants move on to the next phase of the session. They return to work on them later.

#### PHASE 2.

Step 1. Participants focus their attention on aspects of the situation they currently work in, and draw up two lists: '10 things I like

... and '10 things I dislike about my work situation'.

Step 2. Participants next think of their work situation in terms of their preferences within it. For example: Do they prefer working alone or working in teams? Do they prefer working with broad objectives or working with narrowly-defined objectives? Do they prefer to initiate change themselves or to carry through the ideas of others? And so on.

Step 3. Finally participants ask themselves about the distinction between working with people and working with things. They note down their preferences as specifically as possible: People (teaching), Data (exam results), People (Departmental meetings), Information (Subject magazines), and so on.

Comment. These two phases take about 30 minutes and there are many points at which I am tempted to break into the participants' stream of thought and ask them to share their ideas with others. However, it proves to be more effective to do this at the end, when they are really bursting to communicate. I allow them about ten minutes for pair and/or small group discussion.

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PHASE 3.

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PHASE 3.

Step 1. Participants return to their sentence stem lists written in Phase 1 of the session. They re-read each of the sentences and change the verb forms in them in order to silence the admonishing voices and to substitute their own empowered voice: 'could' is substituted for 'should'; 'might' for 'must'; and 'choose to' for 'have/ought to'. In this way, each participant takes control of the 'input' for themselves.

Step 2. Participants then re-consider the sentences and choose from them one which suggests a goal or objective they would really like to achieve over the following three or four months. Having constructed a filter - in Phase 2 of the session - they are now able to choose from the list of '25 ways to ...' at least one 'way' which is in consonance with them and the realities of the world they work in.

PHASE 4.

Step 1. Participants sit comfortably and relax while the trainer leads them in a visualisation exercise (AGOSTA 1988). Participants imagine the three or four months have passed by and they are now able to enjoy the success of

having achieved their goal. They bathe in the pleasure this brings them, and consider all aspects of their success: they imagine how they perceive their success; what they can see, hear, feel, sense, and smell once they have achieved it. They consider how success affects their physical posture, their relationships to others and to themselves. They enjoy their success to the full in order to return to the present more motivated still to achieve it.

Step 2. Participants begin preparing for their goal by analyzing aspects of their circumstances. They make a number of lists:

What resources do I need?

What resources are available to me?

Whose help do I need?

Whose help is available to me?

How many different ways are open to me in order to achieve my goal?

What are the risks involved? What could go wrong?

Step 3. Finally participants begin the process of analyzing their situation, planning what they are going to do and when, and then they are ready to undertake the actions necessary to achieve their goal. They take one last reminder from the session: always review things as they are happening so as to make last minute changes

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PHASE 5

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

MULLIGAN, J. *Handbook*. London

AGOSTA, Joan; 1988.

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#### PHASE 5

Step 1. To end the session I ask participants to involve themselves in a short, creative, group story-writing activity. Given the situation ...

**It was the first day of a new term in a new school. The teacher entered the classroom, paused, looked around, and smiled ...**

Participants complete the story working in pairs or small groups.

Commentary. For some participants this story-telling is a straightforward exercise; for others it turns out to be an impossible task. In the light of the earlier phases of the session they are filled with challenging questions to debate: Why must the teacher be a woman? Why does the teacher have to smile? Is the classroom empty? All provide much food for thought.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY.

MULLIGAN, J. (Consultant Editor); *The Personal Management Handbook*. London: Sphere Reference Books, 1988.

AGOSTA, Joan; *Changing Energies*. Canterbury: Pilgrims Publications, 1988.

1. In *Greta* Vol 3 N°1 Granada: Asociación de Profesores de Inglés de Andalucía, 1995. Mario Rinvolucrí recounts the story of a learner who involuntarily 'hears' his teacher's voice talking to him in English.