Moving from teacher to trainer (MTT1)

Resource 1: The complexities of moving from teacher to trainer

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Introduction

In education you are trained to become a teacher. You may be supported to take on middle management responsibilities but how do you do you learn to become an adviser/advisory teacher/INSET leader, coach? Did anyone train you for this role before you took the job? How did you become good at it? By trial and error probably; by observing successful colleagues. Your approach as a trainer may at first have been very much akin to your approach to teaching young people.

We feel that there is a misguided assumption that teaching adults, and in particular, teachers, is the *same* as teaching young people. Certainly there is an element of truth in the adage ‘Once a teacher, always a teacher’, but we believe that the move from teacher to trainer is highly complex and the person involved needs to take into account a myriad of different issues: about audience, about impact, purpose and outcomes. Our aim here is to explore some of these issues with you.

**Key Point 1: As a trainer you want your audiences to reflect on what you have shared with them, try it out, change and develop the model and make it their own.**

Making the move from teacher to trainer can be an exciting experience. In making this move we rarely have time to think about the complexities of our new role. It can be a little like changing school; even as a very experienced and highly effective teacher you can, in a new environment with different challenges, feel that you are starting out all over again. You know that you can do the job, you know that all of your past experience and the skills that you have developed over the years make you the right person to do the job well but you need to find a way of rethinking your skills, your experiences and your approach to meet this new challenge. As a trainer one of the obvious main differences is that you are working with adult audiences. You know that their time is precious and that you are under enormous pressure to make the best use of this time and to make them feel that during the course of your session/s you have provided them with new, valuable and relevant information and that you are someone who has respect for the experience, expertise and opinions that they bring with them, and that you are sensitive to their needs.

In making the move from teacher to trainer there are a number of key areas to consider. These can be broadly categorised as:

* What is actually involved in fulfilling this new role?
* What are the key differences from my previous role?
* Am I having an impact? How do I know?

As an experienced teacher you seem to know instinctively or intuitively what makes a good lesson and what provides the right context and conditions for learners to make effective progress. In good schools, colleagues share these experiences, learn from others, and take pleasure in devising – either individually or collectively – new strategies and techniques to keep teaching and learning dynamic and fulfilling. The reality is, however, that there is often little time in schools for teachers to really reflect on and talk about what they are doing.

When we become trainers we are now in the position of needing to reflect both for ourselves and for our colleagues on the variety and depth of good practice. But of course we have to find ways of articulating that which is intuitive, instinctive, carefully crafted over years and which we know is at the heart of good teaching. Think about suddenly having to explain to someone exactly how to make a favourite dish that you have been making for years with no longer any need to look at the recipe. What ingredients do they need? What kinds of cooking utensils? Will the temperature and cooking time depend on the oven type? How creative can they be with the ingredients? Do you need to demonstrate certain parts of the recipe? This reflects the relationship between national and regional trainers. You share the recipe, you demonstrate and you allow them to make the dish, adapt it to the tastes of the audience and find their own effective presentational style.

**Key Point 2: Good training results in a combination of immediate impact on classroom practice and bringing about sustainable change in thinking and approach.**

When teachers attend training sessions they will often tell you that what they really want is something that they can take away and use in the classroom the next day. As trainers we cannot pretend that it is not enormously gratifying when a delegate approaches and tells us at the end of a session or puts on their evaluation form that this session has fulfilled this need. This is of course extremely important, as our aim is always to make delegates feel that their time has been well spent and that their attending this session will have a real impact on learners and colleagues. But as trainers how do we move from having a short-term impact to having a long-term and sustainable impact? Can this be achieved in relatively short training sessions, such as we may be organising?

The answers lie in the planning and content as well as the delivery of the session. We hope that these modules will provide the content for sessions but they are not ready-made session plans. Trainers will need to plan each session carefully, depending on the nature of their audience and their needs.

As we hope to have demonstrated throughout these modules, effective training is much more than giving tips for good lessons. It involves stimulating content and delivery, time for reflection, carefully organised discussion and feedback, offering challenges and engaging participants in thinking of a number of ways of exploiting a few carefully chosen activities by examining the strengths of these in terms of teaching and learning. Giving participants time to reflect on and discuss the underpinning pedagogy is crucial. It is easy to work through many classroom activities in a session but the danger is that participants may then go away and simply replicate what they have seen rather than confidently develop different approaches to classroom practice based on understanding the underpinning principles of good teaching and learning that the activities were designed to illustrate. In the context of primary languages in particular we want our colleagues to talk about *why* things work, what skills beyond linguistic ability we are developing in our young learners e.g. listening, concentration and conceptual links to other curriculum areas and how these link to the KS2 Framework.