

From the very first issue of The Teacher Trainer, I have included articles from fields outside ELT. The journal has drawn on ideas in medical practice, drama, horse riding and other areas. These non ELT articles have been perhaps the most consistently popular series of all. Readers seem to find the parallels and the differences very interesting and useful. Below is an idea from business training that was offered by an ELT specialist.

Teaching people about themselves

What can EFL teacher trainers learn from human resources development?

by *Mike Lavery*

Human resources development (HRD) is what a lot of multi-national and large national corporations call their training departments. The title embraces more than providing further education and professional training. It sees the human aspect of a company as its greatest resource and attempts to offer employees 'whole person' training, which benefits individuals in their personal development with, hopefully, a positive spin-off for the organisation.

Seminars on creative thinking, problem solving, effective speaking, transactional analysis, stress control, self-assertion or negotiating are just as useful to people in their personal lives as for the company. These Topics are often seen as 'management training'. This does not, however, mean that they are exclusively for managers. The spectrum has broadened considerably since the introduction of the magic word 'human'.

One of the hats I wear is that of EFL teacher in adult education. The hat I mostly wear is that of industrial language trainer with a multi-national corporation. Our language training department is part of the HRD division. In my personal development as a language teacher, particularly in industry, I found that the demands of a humanistic approach to personnel training and development reflected on the types of lessons I was designing. I believe that the TEFL recognition of a student-centered, humanistic approach coupled with the trend towards more communicative classroom activities has contributed to making students' internalization of language more purposeful.

So how can EFL teacher trainers learn from human resources development? The key is perhaps a more 'whole person' approach to teacher training; much more than basically providing participants with teaching techniques. A whole person approach invites teachers to examine their values, sensitizing them more to the motivation and the needs of their potential learning groups.

Some human resources development activities (in the U.S.A. often known as "experiences") invite participants to undergo a behavioural change to help self development. Key word; INVITE> As soon as a behavioural change is demanded participants may switch-off; it may not suit their personal development style. As language teachers, to what degree do we invite learners to change their behaviour as an aid to language acquisition? Think about it!

There follows an edited example of an HRD activity which I wrote for the 1986 Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training (University Associates, San Diego), reproduced with their permission.

'The Gold Watch': Balancing Personal and Group Values

Procedure

- Ask participants to read 'The Gold Watch worksheet.'
- Ask them (individually) to rank the six characters in the story from 1 (the least objectionable) to 6 (the most objectionable). The six characters are Ringo, Abdul, Charles, Angus, Mr Grey and Jane.
- On completion of individual ranking, ask participants to form themselves into small groups and try to reach a group consensus, i.e. the group ranks the six characters, as in phase 2.
- When this has been done, get small groups to present their rankings to the others.
- Finish with open discussion. 'The Gold Watch Discussion Sheet' can be used as a stimulus.

The Gold Watch, Work Sheet - Situation

Ringo is a thirty-five-year-old salesman with Anderson and Company, an old, established wholesaler of British office equipment. He lives near Anderson's headquarters in London with his wife and two adopted children.

On a recent sales tour of the Persian Gulf, Ringo met Abdul, an office-equipment supplier who was interested in a line of photocopiers worth £250,000. Abdul told Ringo that he would give Ringo an order for the photocopiers in return for a gold Rolex watch worth £7,000. Abdul showed Ringo the watch he wanted in a catalogue, and Ringo said that he would see what he could do.

On returning to London, Ringo told Charles, his boss, about the proposition, asking if he could go ahead and buy the Rolex in order to obtain the order. Charles was outraged and said, "This is immoral! It's not decent British business practice to offer bribes. We're living in a civilized society. If I find out that you've been bribing customers to get orders, I'll fire you on the spot! Have I made myself clear?"

After the confrontation with Charles, Ringo left the office and drove to the home of Angus, his friend and colleague. He explained his plight and then said, "What can I do, Angus? It's an important order, and there's a chance of repeat business: Abdul is interested in office furniture and typewriters as well as additional photocopiers in the future."

Angus thought for a moment and then said, "Ringo, why don't you finance the deal yourself? Buy the bloody watch and land the contract. With your commission and any future business, you'll get a decent return on your investment. Don't even tell Charles; he's so bloody old-fashioned – he has no idea how to do business with our Arab friends."

Ringo left Angus's home, went to his car, thought for a few minutes, and then drove to his bank. Mr Grey, the bank manager and a close friend of Ringo's father, listened to Ringo's reasons for wanting the loan of £7,000. Despite the fact that Ringo's checking account was overdrawn, he agreed to give Ringo the loan immediately.

The next day Ringo went to a jewellery store near his office and asked a clerk for the specific Rolex watch requested by Abdul. While he was waiting for the clerk to bring him the watch, Jane, Charles's secretary, came into the store to buy a birthday present for her mother. Unobserved by Ringo, she watched as the clerk gave the watch to Ringo in exchange for £7,000 cash. In her astonishment she forgot about finding a present for her mother, hurried back to Anderson and Company, burst into Charles's office and asked, "How can a salesman who earns £13,000 a year afford a £7,000 watch?"

Charles was furious. He rushed out of his office and found Ringo just returning from the jewellery store. "You're fired!" he shouted.

"Let me explain....."muttered Ringo.

"No excuses! I warned you!"

At that moment a Telex came through: it read as follows: "NO LONGER INTERESTED IN PHOTOCOPIER DEAL. FOUND ALTERNATIVE SUPPLIER. ABDUL."

The Gold Watch Discussion Sheet

- What past experiences were brought to mind by the story of the gold watch? Which character did you identify with most strongly?
- How were your rankings related to any differences between your personal and professional values? What choices did you have to make?
- What similarities in rankings arose among the members of your group? What differences arose?
- What issues seemed most important to your group?
- How did value conflicts within your group affect the consensus process? How was conflict over values resolved?
- What did this experience show you about the nature of individual values?
- What can you generalize about an individual's personal and professional values? What can you infer about the congruence of personal values and values expressed by or in organizations?

Values – Clarification and EFL Teacher Training

'The Gold Watch' relates to a business situation. However, the conflict of values arising from the story, can also be appreciated by non-business people. In any teacher training situation, trainers and participants are often confronted with questions of ethics, both professional and personal.

In August 1986, Tessa Woodward and I co-trained on a two-week T.E.F.L. Up-date course for 20 participants, all experienced teachers. It was the first time that Tessa and I had worked together. During our preparation for the course, we found that our combined strengths and weaknesses complimented each other. We were happy with the 'package' which we had to offer our group. So off we steamed. After a day and a half, we were approached by a couple of our participants. "We're only really interested in activities for children. We're enjoying everything but it seems to be designed more for teachers of adults." We promised we would do something about it.

Tessa and I are both experienced teacher trainers. Our teaching experience is in adult education. Everything we do in a T.T. situation has been tested or developed in our own classrooms. In this way I feel our credibility is maintained.

In order to solve the problem of our 'kids only' teachers, we had to make a professionally ethical decision. We were not prepared to 'bluff' our way in teacher training for teachers of children, maintaining the principle that everything we presented has been tried and tested by us. We nipped the problem in the bud at an early stage by having the group examine the transferability of activities from an adult to children teaching situation. We invited an experienced children's teacher and teacher trainer, Judith Baker, to make a guest appearance. We encouraged a feed-across mechanism in the

group, whereby outside the course, small groups discussed, presented and developed activities to suit their teaching situations. The course was successful.

Our 'kids only' people told us that they gained a new perspective on the teaching of children. In return, the 'adults only' people had benefited by the cross-pollination of ideas – some perhaps a little humbled by being invited to re-examine the basics of language acquisition. (I certainly benefited in this respect).

Relating the above problem and solution may seem a long way from 'The Gold Watch', but my point is that Tessa and I had to examine our values before ever considering tackling the problem both professionally and humanly.

I feel that classroom management, dealt with in teacher training, needs a more human approach and an element, which has perhaps been lacking – the deeper examination of our own values and those of others.