

Title of Session: Teaching Teachers

Moderator: Dianne Allen

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Room: Teaching Teachers Group

BJB : hi, Gordon.

BJB : Here for Teaching Teachers?

GordonP: Hi

DianneA: Hello Gordon

GordonP: Yes

GordonP: Hi Diane and BJB

DianneA: welcome then ...

DianneA: and what brings you to Teaching Teachers today?

GordonP: I used to attend but got too busy, but I remembered tonight

BJB cheers for Gordon!

DianneA: is there anything on your mind that you would like to discuss, then

GordonP: Instructional design for difficult teachers

DianneA: I usually offer this session open to participants' issues, and you are our only participant tonight

DianneA: OK, let's unpack that a bit ...

DianneA: what do you mean by 'difficult teachers'

GordonP: I run a 15 county adult ed coop, and some of the teachers do not benefit from pd

DianneA listens to Gordon

DianneA: you say you are involved in a coop ... does that mean the participants are there in a voluntary capacity?

BjB : do you find that it is only the older teachers who are resistant?

GordonP: the participants yes, the teachers are paid

DianneA: hmmm, different words, different expectations for me ...

GordonP: it depends not on age but something else, I haven't identified

DianneA: tell me some more [about] the program and the context Gordon

BjB . o O (fear of the unknown? Fear of being made to look stupid in front of peers?)

DianneA: do you mean presenters = 'participants'?

GordonP: it is a GED program

BjB shuts up and listens

DianneA: and teachers are paid to attend coop sessions?

GordonP: as well as ESL

GordonP: yes, teachers receive a stipend

DianneA: I don't know GED Gordon, sorry, I am Australian based

GordonP: it is a high school equivalent for those who have dropped out of high school

GordonP: we have students from 17 to much older

BjB : are you teaching teachers who teach GED?

DianneA: Ok more for my benefit and clarity again .. what do you mean by 'some of the teachers do not benefit from pd'?

GordonP: yes

BjB : pd = professional development

GordonP: it seems they sit there, but when the next class time comes, the teaching does not improve

DianneA: Ok, that is a bit clearer for me, and thanks Bj for your questions that have helped that ...

BjB . o O (sounds like an ESL discussion ;-) How tricky words can be!)

DianneA: Gordon, are your teachers of GED there to find out how to improve their teaching, and have they come voluntarily?

DianneA: sorry for the double barreled question

GordonP: that is a good question. I think too many show up for the stipend

DianneA nods for coercion via incentives ...

GordonP: all teachers need 12 hours of pd every year

DianneA: our news media is blaming the economic situation on bad short term incentives ...

BjB : is technology involved in the pd lessons, Gordon?

GordonP: limited, usually ppt

DianneA: Ok, another question ... have these teachers of GED been invited to identify the part of their teaching that they would like to improve?

GordonP: to an extent.

DianneA: can you elaborate please

GordonP: I have 25 teachers in a radius of 100 miles. I can only bring them together a few times

GordonP: I tried using WebCT for online pd, but only one attended

DianneA: good adult education is premised on (1) the adults drawing on their experience; (2) reflecting on that (3) identifying what they need (4) committing to learning what they really want to know

BjB : maybe try Tapped In?

GordonP: I can try to get them to do Tapped In, but the stipends...

BjB . o O (they would have their transcripts to submit for stipends)

DianneA: How long do you have them together when they get together Gordon?

GordonP: Diane, I have a M.Ed. in adult ed. I know what to do for the GED students, but it seems much harder for teachers

GordonP: they are together 6 hours

DianneA: Gordon, it may be a question of design ...

GordonP: yes, agreed

DianneA: and really considering what it is that these teachers are about ...

GordonP: smaller groups?

DianneA: and if there are 25 different needs then you need a process that accommodates these differences

GordonP: one on one?

DianneA: Gordon I asked if these teachers have been invited to identify what they would like to improve, and you said 'to some extent'

DianneA: can you elaborate the nature of that extent?

GordonP: we poll our teachers and provide pd to the greatest need

GordonP: not all needs

DianneA: I come from a background that suggests that individual teachers are individual, and have individual needs

GordonP: yes

DianneA: OK so you do what most pd people do: deliver the standard content to the most stated area of need

GordonP: yes...

DianneA: when I say 'standard' it is you or someone else as the expert telling what to do to improve ...

GordonP: usually someone else is the expert

GordonP: I am the content standards expert

DianneA: without recognizing that what might be at issue is more about what a person can comfortably do to travel on the change journey ...

DianneA: let me ask you

DianneA: when did you last engage in doing something different so that you could improve ... in any field?

GordonP: I went back to school for my Masters

DianneA: tell me some more ...

DianneA: what was the stimulus?

GordonP: I had topped out in my position so I needed more letters after my name. I did learn a lot.

DianneA: and why did you choose the masters?

GordonP: I was already in adult ed and I found a masters program in adult ed

DianneA: any other reason?

GordonP: not really, I was not that good a student in undergraduate.

DianneA: when you started out did you have any clear goals ...

GordonP: yes, advancement in my career

DianneA: or was it just the stimulus of the course and the accreditation that meant you changed and learned a lot?

GordonP: no, it was a great education

DianneA: no specific objective in learning to improve?

GordonP: I started to say not at the start, but yes I did want to improve

DianneA: as the course unfolded did you find that a specific goal formed?

GordonP: yes, to put some of the great new ideas into action

DianneA: and what did you do next .. to try and put one of the great new ideas into action?

GordonP: yes, distance learning only to find the rules of state bureaucracy swallowed it up

DianneA: OK, so here is a try at change, and here is a negative result ...

DianneA: what happened next for you on that objective?

GordonP: that was the attempt at WebCT...

DianneA: another non-success ...

DianneA: and so where are you at present on that objective?

GordonP: now I am looking at a Moodle site

DianneA: and why are you persisting?

GordonP: for both teachers and GED students

GordonP: I am just hard headed I guess

BjB chuckles

DianneA: so you have a goal outside of yourself .. for someone else's good?

DianneA: altruism?

GordonP: this life is not for me, but to help others

DianneA: OK ... let me share some of myself .. otherwise this can feel like an interrogation ...

GordonP: good I need a break

DianneA: what I have been trying to do Gordon, is to apply the adult ed principles ..

DianneA: and ask you have you tried to improve, and what has been your experience ...

DianneA: I was working in management and had topped out/ was not getting enough challenge ...

DianneA: I wasn't interested in MBA and financial side of management ...

DianneA: I new that the three day seminar didn't generate change for me ...

DianneA: then a flier for a Masters of Dispute Resolution crossed my desk ...

DianneA: and in it the course used adult ed principles .. what are you here for ... identify your goal for this session.

DianneA: I didn't have anything clearer than I wanted to find out if others had better

ideas about how to handle disputes ...

DianneA: sometimes we don't know what we don't know and so cannot generate clear and specific learning objectives

DianneA: and sometimes it helps to be open to anything that comes ...

DianneA: is what I am sharing making sense to you?

GordonP: yes it is. The buy in

DianneA: OK I was in ... and then I did find a specific goal a number actually

DianneA: we had the workshop content delivery ...

DianneA: and we had simulations to try and that was where I came unstuck ...

DianneA: now I had another clearer objective .. how to learn from simulations, from 'experience'

DianneA: as well as workshops we had to write a 6000 word essay and prepare a 20 minute presentation to peers

GordonP: is learning from simulations transferable to my teachers?

DianneA: for that assignment we were at liberty to design our own study .. ie do some research for ourselves

DianneA: at the presentations, we were involved in sharing what was important and what we had found ... and any thing else we wanted to try ...

DianneA: Gordon, any one who is trying to improve has to learn how to learn from experience, and it is not easy

DianneA: we have to learn how to observe ourselves

BjB . o O (and it takes TIME)

DianneA: we have to learn how to identify what the problem is

DianneA: we have to learn from others what other strategies might work better than our current strategies

DianneA: we have to then commit to trying what others suggest

DianneA: or to know why we reject trying that

DianneA: sometimes what we reject is sensible .. it will not work for us

DianneA: and because we know ourselves and our values better than anyone else we have good reasons for not going down that track

DianneA: you are still persisting with distance ed for pd for GED people because you know they need help ...

DianneA: but you haven't yet thought about how to design something for them so that they can explore what they identify as they own particular need

DianneA: and now I have done what you have been doing ... telling you what ...

DianneA: does it make sense?

DianneA: does is sound like something you could try to do?

GordonP: yes, but can you get teachers to identify their need?

DianneA: why not?

GordonP: I will try

DianneA: one way is to ask them to tell a practice story ...

DianneA: and to identify what problem is there that they would like to explore ...

DianneA: once they have identified their problem, set them on the way to finding the answer that makes most sense to them that they could try next time in class

DianneA: then have them report back to you or to the class / group .. and see what other responses develop

BjB . o O (there's the time factor...that most pd opportunities do not offer. How to try new methods and ideas and get feedback when the pd only occurs once or twice a year)

BjB : That's one of the reasons Tapped in was created

GordonP: OK, from my "office" I can do all this?

DianneA: and what I have been describing is called 'action research' in some quarters

BjB : yes. Or you can create a group room for your pd

DianneA: and there is a new group here looking at 'action research' ...

BjB : cool, Dianne. We had our first Action Research discussion last week.

BjB . o O (December 1)

DianneA: Gordon, if you'd like, I can send some more gory details of what we were doing with masters ed students at UoW that developed from a narrative (story) into a practice relevant research ...

GordonP: I would like that

DianneA: Ok I will send that to your email address, and please feel free to come back to me with any questions

DianneA: do you have any questions now, before we wrap?

GordonP: no, but this is exciting. A new direction...

GordonP: to the same end

DianneA nods

DianneA: BJ any final questions or comments?

GordonP: thank you Dianne

GordonP: and Bj

BjB : my brain hurts, Dianne!

DianneA: and it is late at night... off you go to bed!

BjB : Gordon, if you would like any help in starting a group or in bringing your pd folks to your office, let me know

GordonP: how late is it in Australia

DianneA: Ok good night all, I'll be in touch

GordonP: thank you

DianneA: it is 1pm Friday afternoon Gordon

BjB hugs Dianne. Thanks for the mental exercise!

GordonP: adios all

DianneA: adios

BjB waves goodnight to Gordon