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An Introspective Workshop on the Teaching/ Learning Process

Prentiss Wharton Phillips
School for International Training

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AN INTROSPECTIVE WORKSHOP
ON THE TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESS

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The School for International Training
OF THE EXPERIMENT IN INTERNATIONAL LIVING
Brattleboro, Vermont

by

Prentiss Wharton Phillips

MAT V

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This project by Prentiss Phillips is accepted
in its present form.

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Principal Advisor

Raymond Clark

Project Advisors/Readers:

JUDY BORDEN

JAN GASTON

**AN INTROSPECTIVE WORKSHOP
On The Teaching/Learning Process:**

A B S T R A C T

Descriptors: Teacher Programs, Teacher Workshops
Teacher Improvement, Self-Actualization

This is a course outline for a 16+ hour teacher-training workshop. It is designed for about 16 participants. The purpose of the workshop is to engage teachers and prospective teachers in the processes of self evaluation, goal formation and the development/application of more effective ways to teach. This is done through a series of introspective/extra-spective exercises based on four central questions:

What kind of teacher are you now?
What is teaching/learning?
How do you want to be as a teacher?
How can you reach your objectives?

These questions are systematically explored in four corresponding units. Some of the questions are worked on individually while others are studied in small groups and shared later with the whole group. It is lead by a single facilitator whose role is to keep the workshop running smoothly as well as to participate in the workshop himself. Each unit is accompanied with procedural notes to aid the facilitator in presenting the exercises. However, because the workshop emphasizes flexibility for individualization, the facilitator and participants are expected to take responsibility for adapting the workshop to fit their own needs as a group and as individuals.

Prentiss Phillips
June 30, 1975

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

I have designed the following workshop to help teachers and prospective teachers to increase their teaching effectiveness by providing them with a forum in which they are encouraged to explore the teaching process and their role as teacher within it. This is not intended to show anyone a 'right' or 'best' way to teach, but instead to motivate each person to formulate teaching goals and to continue to search for a way that feels comfortable and leads toward the fulfillment of his changing goals. In short, the purpose is to engage teachers in the process of self-evaluation and change in the belief that each person can be his own best judge of what ways of teaching are most effective for him.

I have chosen a workshop format for its versatility and emphasis on cooperative participation. These two characteristics are essential in order to accommodate the principal activities of the workshop which alternate between introspection and group interchange. Versatility is needed for the individualized and integrated workshop activities while cooperative participation is required for effective group interchange.

The success of this workshop first depends on how well the following questions move the participants to engage in that process:

What kind of teacher are you now?

What is teaching/learning?

How do you want to be as a teacher? and,

How can you reach your objectives?

Each of these questions will comprise a separate, although related and overlapping unit of the workshop.

The second and equally important ingredient in making this workshop work is procedure. If it is to be an effective experience, the way in which the aforementioned questions are presented and dealt with will be as important as the questions themselves. For that reason I have given special attention to the procedural aspect of each unit so that the questions will be as viable and relevant as possible - without compromising their integrity or intent. All of the questions call for sincere inquiry with all participants looking inward, outward and inward again. That process of self-exploration can provide each person a more fulfilling educational experience. I have therefore written suggestions before each unit to act as guidelines. However, there can and should be additions, deletions and modifications depending on the specific teaching conditions. Because there is no way of foreseeing the many variations that could arise, I have tried to give the workshop maximum flexibility by being as non-

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directive as possible without being vague, and as explicit as possible without being restrictive. I hope that I have struck a balance that will provide both clarity and freedom.

F O R M A T

The workshop centers on the participants' teaching personalities. The approach used to explore them consists of cycles of introspection and extra-spection, to coin a word. For this reason, the sequence of units and of activities within each unit is consistent with the overall approach. Unit I begins looking inward, Unit II outward, Unit III inward, and Unit IV outward again. This alternation is the procedural core of the workshop.

The leadership role should be filled by a facilitator who creates an open environment for the participants' self and shared discovery, and who also is continually aware and evaluative of the substructures and goals of the workshop. The facilitator should tailor the workshop to be relevant to the needs of the people, place and time for which it would be held. He should give close attention to the procedural notes to insure that the presentation of questions proceeds with minimal frustration and optimal clarity. The facilitator should also be aware of, and sensitive to both personal and group dynamics. He should be at ease in handling the exposure of feelings and be able to deal with problems that might result.

While the total number of participants could range anywhere from 8 to 24, I believe that the ideal number would fall somewhere between 12 and 16, including the facilitator

who would be an active participant. This number would comprise the main body of the workshop. However, many of the questions - because of their personal, subjective nature - would be more viable if they could be explored independently and/or in small groups. These groups could then examine the questions on their own and later reassemble as a whole group, where thoughts, feelings and experiences could be shared and contrasted.

The workshop should be open to anyone expressing a desire to better understand the teaching/learning process and his identity as a part of it. It could, however, be a good blend to have persons both with and without formal teaching experience.

The workshop could be given with equal effectiveness at any time. However, during a program of study, such as at S.I.T., different timings would be effective, for different reasons. Given at the start of a program the people would not have had time to fix one another into roles. Instead, the participants would be comparatively free of set expectations either from themselves or from others in their new environment. Given later, there would likely be an ease and candor fostered by familiarity. No matter when the workshop is given, if given in full, the duration would be approximately 16+ workshop session hours. Each session should last about two hours, leaving room for variation.

The workshop should be given anywhere other than in a 'rowed' classroom setting. For general, whole group meetings circular or semi-circular seating would be best. However, as I've said, much of the concentrated effort, i.e. question asking and research work should be done in foursomes or pairs who would situate themselves accordingly.

W O R K S H O P

First Day of Workshop

Objectives:

- a) To introduce the participants to one another.
- b) To familiarize participants with outline and objective of workshop by distributing copies of the Introduction (see pages 1-3) before the first meeting.

Procedural Notes: If the group is unacquainted with one another divide them into pairs for introductions. Have each person within the pair interview the other. Then at a general meeting ask each to introduce his partner to the group. Afterward initiate discussion about the introduction which participants have read.

Unit I. What kind of teacher are you now?

Objectives:

- a) To have participants examine themselves as teachers and as persons.
- b) To review teaching ideals and experiences.
- c) To compare the ideals of teaching with the realities of teaching.

A. As a teacher what kind of person are you?

Procedural Notes: Hand out copies of the following questions for each person to consider and record on paper; this can be done either in or out of class.

1. What characteristics come to mind when you think of yourself as a teacher?
2. How do you see yourself in that role now?
3. What characteristics come to mind when you think of yourself as a person?
4. What similarities and differences are there between you, the teacher, and you, the person?

B. What are your teaching ideals and experiences?

Procedural Notes: Divide into pairs and have each person take a turn asking the other the questions under 1. The "would/do" combination is to make the

questions adaptable to both teachers and non-teachers. Each person should record his own answers. Then regroup, if possible, into pairs of an experienced teacher and someone who has never taught. Have those who have not taught ask the questions under 2. to those who have taught. Record these answers also.

1. Teaching Ideals:

What would/do you like about teaching? Why?

What wouldn't/don't you like about teaching?

Why?

What part would/do you play in making the experience as you would want it?

How would/do you feel about yourself in a teaching situation?

What would/do you like and/or dislike about yourself? Why?

How would/do you want your students to be?

What characteristics would/do you want them to have and which ones would/do you not want them to have?

How would/do you feel if they weren't/aren't what you wanted?

What would/do you do with your feelings in this case?

How would/do you feel if they liked you?
disliked you? Would/does this affect your
teaching?

2. Teaching Experiences:

What did you like about your teaching exper-
ience? Why?

What didn't you like about teaching? Why?

How did you affect what you did or didn't like?

How did you feel about yourself as a teacher?

What did you like or dislike about yourself?

Why?

Would you have liked to have been a student in
that class? Would you have liked the
teacher (yourself)?

What were your students like?

How did you feel about them?

What was it about them that you liked or dis-
liked? Why?

Do you think/feel that they liked you? Why?

C. How do the ideals compare with the realities?

Procedural Notes: Assemble as a whole class. Then on
large sheets of paper, one for each question in 1. and
2., elicit and list the responses to each question

(about 20) and compare the ideals with the realities
by putting the sheets up on the wall for all to see.

Unit II. What is Teaching? What is Learning?

Objectives:

- a) To elicit the participants' views of teaching and learning.
- b) To research definitions, opinions, and experiences of others in regard to teaching and learning.
- c) To share and evaluate findings and begin incorporating them into individual perspectives of teaching and learning.

A. Record personal views of teaching and learning.

Procedural Notes: Ask participants to write description of what teaching and learning means to them. Allow each participant the freedom to use phrases, words or sentences. Discuss these descriptions as a complete group and collect to return to later.

B. Explore attitudes of teaching and learning, and their interrelationship.

Procedural Notes: The following list of topics or activities are to be worked on separately by small study teams of two or more. Divide everyone into study pairs. Have each pair choose one of these topics or one of their own relevant design. Schedule presentations. Each team should keep notes with which to present findings to the whole group.

1. Definitions: dictionaries, etymology - educational terminology resources.
2. History: teaching and learning as viewed by past cultures, civilizations, and great teachers, i.e. Plato, Aristotle.
3. Book: The Teacher and Learning, Ernest Melby (Professor of Education, Michigan State University). National Education Library Press, 1963.
4. Teacher/Student/Non-Educator Poll: Interview.
5. Artistic Expressions: Music, poetry, paintings..
6. Naturalistic Definitions: Universe - solar system, Earth, plants, animals, climate, geography..
7. Infant and Early Child Education: Teaching/learning process for a baby.
8. In Religion: How viewed by different religions.
9. By Metaphor: The teaching/learning process is like the preparation/consumption of a meal. Plan, buy, prepare, serve, eat, digest...Develop the metaphor in detail, relating it back to the educational process.
10. Any Others...

C. What happens in the teaching/learning process?

Procedural Notes:

1. Each team reports its findings with open discussion and questions after each report. During the reports, each listener notes those aspects which are most relevant to him. Take a ten to fifteen minute break between reports.
2. Each participant re-reads the description that he wrote in the beginning of this unit and reconsiders it in view of the reports. Out of the contrast or similarity each participant then tries to re-compose a statement of his own view of teaching/learning within the context of his own anticipated use and participation in that process.

B. Which characteristics do you want?

Procedural Notes: Individually read and evaluate out of class the distributed profiles. Then each person should select, according to his own view of an effective teacher, those characteristics that seem most desirable. A list of these characteristics should be kept by each participant to serve as a personal model of an ideal teacher.

C. Establish Objectives.

Procedural Notes: Each participant out of class, looks at himself in terms of his profile of an effective teacher to see which attributes he has or doesn't have. He forms objectives by asking the following questions and recording the answers to show and discuss with the facilitator during a one-to-one meeting at the end of the unit.

Of these characteristics that I have, which would I like to strengthen? Which would I like to lose?

Of those that I don't have, which would I like to acquire?

From these questions each participant should be able to build a model of the teacher he would like to become.

Unit IV: How Can You Reach Your Objectives?Objectives:

- a) To share and develop alternatives for growth.
- b) To choose personal strategies for change.

A. Open Suggestions.

Procedural Notes: Group into the same foursomes as in Unit III. Take turns responding informally to the following questions under Number 1. Keep notes of responses. Then pass out copies of suggestions under Number 2, and at a general meeting draw up a master list including all new additions from notes from Number 1.

1. If you have taught or are now teaching, what successful or unsuccessful attempts have you made to change your teaching effectiveness? (Be specific - what did you do or are you doing that worked/works, or didn't/doesn't work?)

If you haven't taught, what successful or unsuccessful methods have you tried or are you trying to improve your learning? (Be specific.)

2. Alternative strategies for growth:

Experiment -- try different techniques; if they work, use them. If or when they don't work, re-examine their potential for another time to keep or discard.

Re-evaluate your teaching regularly, and seek out evaluation from others (i.e. students, administrators, and other teachers).

Discuss objectives frequently with anyone who shows interest.

Re-examine your teaching environment and students' needs continually, making modifications to suit changes.

Focus on one specific activity at a time. Give your attention to one objective per day, week, or whatever period of time you need to resolve it.

Attend classes, conferences, seminars, etc. Read.

B. Natural Selection.

Procedural Notes: Each participant should individually, out of class, review his lists of objectives from Unit III and strategies from Part A. With these two lists, each participant should assign one or more strategies to each objective. He should be encouraged to modify or integrate existing strategies, or invent new ones to best fit personal objectives.

Final Note:

The guiding principle behind this unit is that each person aspiring to be a teacher or to improve his teaching, must ultimately discover the ways to fulfillment for himself.

No one else can say with authority what will or won't make a good teacher. What others can do is make suggestions, offer criticisms, share experiences, and express support. Each person, through pursuit and exploration can achieve substantial growth and fulfill objectives.

To each participant:

Be perceptive of your own strengths and weaknesses and those of your students.

Be perceptive of all that you are and use what you perceive, for that is you and all the abilities you possess; with them you can reach your potential. And in the realm of self-fulfillment and growth, there are no boundaries.