University of Huddersfield Repository

Dale, Heather

Building the Effective Relationship: Its Use in Teaching, Training and Presenting

Original Citation

Dale, Heather (2009) Building the Effective Relationship: Its Use in Teaching, Training and Presenting. International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management, 9 (9). pp. 141-148. ISSN 1447-9524

This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/7860/

Building the Effective Relationship: Its Use in Teaching, Training and Presenting

Heather Dale

Building the Effective Relationship: Its Use in Teaching, Training and Presenting

Heather Dale, University of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, UK

Abstract: Over the years, it has become clear to me that the groups of students I like best are also the ones who learn the best: when I am at my most real, most energetic and most open, then those groups of students learn best. When I am less giving of myself, my students learn less well. Consequently, I have become interested in how my work as a psychotherapist, in which the relationship is key, can inform my work as a trainer. I have realised that one of the most effective tools we have in teaching is ourselves – our personality, our imagination, our humour. When I can establish a relationship with a group, as with a client, I am more effective. I call this the effective teaching alliance. This workshop discusses the importance of the teaching alliance, and offers a simple theoretical tool. This is the relationship quadrant, which is adapted from a model first developed by Ernst (1971). I will use it to explain how we might develop and use the relationship to be more effective trainers. This paper also draws on the work of Irving Yalom and Chip and Dan Heath.

Keywords: Relationship Quadrant, Effective Training, education

I F YOU ASK someone to recall their best or their worst teachers even years or decades later, why can they remember individuals with clarity and feeling? Is it because of the crucial significance of the teacher-student relationship? This paper is a practice paper, offering an original training dynamic that can be used as a reflective paradigm. It is intended for those who lead groups either as trainers, managers or other forms of leadership.

I have taught, in some capacity, for over 40 years, and over that time it has become clear to me that the groups of participants I like best are also the ones who learn the best: when I am at my most real, most energetic and most open, both I and they work and learn better. When I am less giving of myself, my participants learn less well. One of the most effective tools we have in teaching is ourselves – our personality, our imagination, our humour. (Hill and Hawk 2000). Various authors, including Yalom (1991) and Hunt and West (2006) have established a link between the effectiveness of establishing a relationship in teaching, as in therapy.

Consequently, my interest is in how as trainers and educators we can best develop an environment in which the best learning will take place. I have examined ways in which my work as a psychotherapist, in which the relationship is a key element, can inform my work as a trainer. In psychotherapy, reflection on the relationship is considered so vital that there is a formal structure (compulsory supervision) in place for examining the dynamic between therapist and client. No such structure exists in the training field, so educators need to develop their own ways of reflecting on practice in order to improve own performance and student experience. If is true that effective teaching is linked to reflective practice (Gioveannelli 2003) then education and educators may benefit from a study of the "Border Land" (Hunt and West 2006) between the two disciplines.

COMMON
GROUND

So, in assuming an answer of yes to the above question, this paper offers a tool, developed over years of analysis of my own teaching/training practice. it is called "*maintaining the effective teaching alliance."*

Socrates, who is famously quoted by Plato (circa 348) as saying "the unexamined life is not worth living" might have agreed.

Whilst I have used the word "teaching", it is equally applicable to any situation in which there is an educative component (i.e. in which one person is responsible for imparting knowledge that others wish to acquire). Consequently, this paper uses the words educator and trainer interchangeably. The terms "she and "he" are also used randomly and interchangeably.

Effective – and Ineffective - Dynamics

This section describes four, easily distinguishable dynamics, or teaching alliances, that can be seen in the training room. Each dynamic is shown as a quadrant in a larger diagram. The quadrants are described below, working clockwise on the diagram, starting with the top right-hand quadrant. This builds on the work of Ernst (1973), who suggested that there were four ways of being in the world, and that the way to better communication is to understand and use each of them.

I suggest that each dynamic has some strengths, and may be useful in some circumstances but three of them can be seen to have many weaknesses. Most trainers, if willing dispassionately to examine their own practice, should recognise themselves in at least one of these three dynamics, at least some of the time. However, a willingness to reflect and monitor will help create conditions to adapt individual styles to move themselves into the fourth quadrant, where the teaching alliance is at its most effective (Miller et al 2008).

Whilst it is likely that trainers may move around the quadrants according to variants such as low mood, it is important to recognise that each trainer is likely to have a variety of styles, and may move around the quadrants (Ernst 1973) but the careful analysis of each session is a good starting point.

Dynamic 1 - The Co-ercive Teaching Alliance (Controlling Educator)

In this quadrant, the educator's stance is forceful and rather rigid. Participants are expected to be ready to start exactly on time, and to listen quietly to the lecture. Boundaries, such as timings of beginnings and endings, may be rigorously enforced. In addition, students may experience themselves as being mocked (for not knowing the right answer) or not being heard.

Trainers in this quadrant may be very conscious of how much there is to get through in a short space of time. However, participants are likely to experience the trainer as unnecessarily rigid, inflexible, and even aggressive, even when this is not the intention. Participants may feel bullied, overwhelmed, and under-valued, because this style leaves no room for negotiation; the facilitator is too rigid in her approach and over-concerned with her message. A facilitator in this dynamic gives a clear message, of seeing herself as the expert and being uninterested in allowing debate or discussion. Participants become passive recipients of the material, knowing the facts, but unable to apply them.

The strength of this approach is that clear boundaries are maintained, and plenty of information will be given, often in a clear and straightforward manner. However, participants are

likely to be resentful of a style that makes the trainer so clearly the expert and leaves little time for reflection or discussion.

The educator in this group needs to remember to allow for flexibility and discussion, and to see learning as reciprocal.

The trainer's energy has gone into being seen as having expertise rather than sharing knowledge.

Dynamic 2 – The Concessionary Teaching Alliance (Passive Educator)

In this quadrant, the trainer's stance is over-anxious and placatory. In his attempts to please participants debate may be allowed to over-run inappropriately, often at the expense of the material. The educator does not recognise the need to impart and/or explain information clearly or is unable to be assertive enough, even when he himself is knowledgeable. So much time is allowed for discussion, not all of it relevant, that expertise is not being shared and reflected upon.

Whist the trainer in this quadrant is likely to be pleasant and likeable, she runs the risk of participants under-valuing the training, as well as the trainer, and may experience herself as being bullied, when student demands on her time escalate unrealistically followed by complaints when not all the demands can be met.

Behaviourally, this dynamic can be recognised by the trainer who, whilst well-prepared, is not able to control discussions appropriately, and who finishes sessions with material still uncovered. This trainer is also likely to experience large amounts of stress as he is so anxious to please, and yet all her efforts seem to go unrewarded.

The strength of this approach is that plenty of time is given for debate, but boundaries are not well-held, and important points may not be made. The trainer is likely to finish sessions exhausted and may burn out early. The educator's energy has gone into placating the group rather than sharing of expertise.

The educator in this group needs to learn to be more confident, both in the fact that he has something to say worth saying, and in keeping debate relevant (holding boundaries for the group).

Dynamic 3 – The Collusive Teaching Alliance (Manipulative Educator)

In this quadrant, the trainer is anxious to get through the session as quickly as possible (Ernst 1973). Consciously or unconsciously, she asks the group to collude with her in the relaxation of boundaries. She does this by appearing to offer, for example, an attractive choice of late starting and early finishing times. Initially this appears attractive, but quite soon group-members are likely to feel they have been manipulated and will experience strong feelings of discontent.

Boundaries become elastic, or non-existent. Because the trainer is so lacking in interest, participants too will become disenchanted, often shown in coming late (as sessions start late anyway) or not coming at all.

An example is of a group of students who, at the beginning of the year, commented that they were having a very easy time in this particular class as the tutor only used half the available time, but who then formally complained at the end of the academic year.

The educator's energy goes into getting away from the group, rather than being with the group, and as the group react to this, they too may stay away.

The trainer who employs this tactic explicitly does not want to be training, for reasons that may include: over-stressful life, inability to concentrate, lack of motivation or interest, or burnout. Any trainers finding themselves consistently in this quadrant may need to consider a career break or change.

Dynamic 4: Collaborative Dynamic (Effective Educator)

In this quadrant the teaching alliance is at its most effective. The trainer is well-prepared, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic. She is clear about the important points that need to be addressed in the session. However, she is open to hearing from, and learning from the participants, and has built in time to allow for this.

Whilst beings open to challenges from the group, she is also able to hold boundaries, not only of time, but also in keeping discussions relevant to the application of knowledge. Because plenty of time is allowed for the facts to be explored in exercises or debate, either structured (essential for large groups) or unstructured (more suitable in small groups of under 15 participants), participants feel engaged and valued, and consequently learn at a deep level (i.e. facts are not only assimilated, but application is understood).

Whilst this may sound simple, it actually it takes a trainer with high energy, one who is confident enough in her own knowledge base to enjoy being challenged. Trainers in this quadrant aspire to Socrates' definition of wisdom – an open awareness of one's own ignorance. Participants feel valued and interested, and learn faster and deeply.

The trainer in this quadrant is able to put whatever problems may be current in her own life on hold, in order to be totally available to participants during the session.

Learning to move through the Quadrants

Whilst understanding one's own style is important, it is equally important to have a way of reflecting on, and moving, if desirable, to another quadrant in the box. The list of questions below offers a useful checklist for both before and after sessions.

Reflective Questions to ask before the Session

- Am I ready to work today, and if not, what I am going to do?
- Am I looking forward to working with this group? What will I most enjoy about this group?
- Am I completely at ease with the material I am presenting?
- Am I clear about the points I want to make today?
- Am I enthusiastic about the material?
- Am I interested in hearing what the participants have to say?
- Have I allowed enough time for questions and participation?
- Am I looking forward to getting feedback from participants?

Reflective Questions to ask after the Session

- Did I maintain boundaries (start/finish on time, keep discussions relevant, and allow time for different participants to speak)
- Did I get through the most important points (and if not, what went wrong)
- As far as I could tell, were participants fully engaged (and if not, did I make time to find out why not?)
- Was there useful debate and conversation?
- Did I allow time for feedback?

Conclusion

It will be clear that the most useful dynamic is the left-hand-top quadrant. This is because the other three dynamics all dis-empower the participants, and to some degree, dis-empower the trainer too. Since people learn best when they feel liked and approved of (Hill and Hawk 2000), this means that the teaching alliance is *ineffective*. The trainer who is interested in getting the most from the group, will therefore be motivated to reflect on own performance in order to move into the *collaborative dynamic*, (effective teaching alliance) and thus offer improved learning opportunities.

Good training, in whatever field is not easy. A useful analogy may be to see the group as a family, with the trainer as parent. The group needs to be nourished (so enough information needs to be given) stimulated (time for discussion and thought) and also to feel safe (boundaries maintained). The trainer who considers his part in this, at least for much of the time, will be more effective than the trainer who does not, and who does not pay attention to their own processes.

Of course, it is not new to suggest that trainers who develop strong relationships with participants are seen as more effective trainers than those that do not. There has been much written about the need to develop strong relationships with participants, and to encourage participants to become *reflexive learners* (Dewy, 1993, Schon 1995) in order for them to become independent thinkers

However, much of the current literature assumes that those who are, or who will be effective trainers, already have the necessary disposition (Giovannelli 2003, Hubble Miller et al 2008). There is very little written about how to develop a reflective way of being in order to utilise best practice. This paper offers a way for practitioners to fill that gap.

The Four Dynamics

Effective educator	Controlling educator
Flexible, engaged and engaging (collaborative)	*Rigid, forceful, and inflexible* (coercive)
Manipulative educator *Uninterested, and uninvolved* (collusive)	Passive educator *Over-anxious, over-concerned with being liked* (concessionary)

References

Berne E. (1961) Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy. Grove Press, NY, USA.

Berne E. (1972)"What do you say after you say hello?" Transworld Publishers Ltd, London

Dewy J (1993) How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process Boston: D.C. Heath and Co.

Ernst F (1973) The OK Corral: the grid for get-on –with TAJ, 1, 4 pp231-240

Gibbs C (2002) Effective teaching: exercising self-efficacy and thought control of action Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association, University of Exeter, England

Giovannelli M (2003) Relationship Between *Reflective Disposition To*ward *Teaching* and *Effective Teaching*. Journal of Educational Research Vol. 96 p1/2

Heath C & Heath D (2007) Why some ideas stick and Others Die London: Random.

Hill J & Hawk K (2000) Making a Difference in the Classroom: Effective Teaching Practice in Low Decile, Multicultural Schools AIMHI report to the Ministry of Education, New Zealand

Hunt C and West L (2006) Learning in a Border Country: Using Psychodynamic Ideas in Teaching and Research Studies in the Education of Adults, Vol. 38, No. 2. pp. 160-177.

Jowett B (1893) [translator] The Dialogues of Plato: Selections from the Translation of Benjamin Jowett pp. 3-29. Third edition & copy; 1927, Oxford University Press, New York: Liverwright Publishing Company.

Kitzinger C & Perkins R (1993) Changing our Minds: Lesbian Feminism and Psychology, New York University Press.

Lawrence M & Maguire M (Eds) (1997) Psychotherapy with Women Macmillan

Miller S, Hubble M, and Duncan B (2008) 'Supershrinks' Therapy Today, April 2008 Vol. 19 No 3

Mitchell J (2000) Psychoanalysis and feminism: a radical reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis, Penguin

Steering Committee (2002) Empirically supported therapy relationships: Conclusions and Recommend-
    ations on the Division 29 Task Force in J.C. Norcross(ed): Psychotherapy relationships that
    work: therapists contributions and patients responsiveness Oxford University Press pp41-43
Schon D (1995) The Reflective Practioner How Professionals think in Action Arena
Stewart I, Joines V. (1987) Transactional Analysis today: a new Introduction to Transactional Analysis
    Life space
Yalom I (1991) Love's Executioner and other Tales of Psychotherapy Penguin

About the Author

Heather Dale
Currently, I am a Senior Lecturer in Counselling at University of Huddersfield, in the UK.
However, my first degree was in Literature, which developed my abiding interest in relation-
ships. My early career involved working in children's homes, and, later, working with women
escaping domestic violence. I drifted into working, and teaching, as a therapist, which is
now my full-time profession. I have a Master of Arts in Counselling and a Post-Graduate
Teaching Certificate (PGCE). I am a senior accredited counsellor, and a Fellow of the British
Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

Please visit the Journal website at http://www.Management-Journal.com
for further information about the Journal or to subscribe.

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS JOURNALS

The International JOURNAL *of the* ARTS IN SOCIETY

Creates a space for dialogue on innovative theories and practices in the arts, and their inter-relationships with society.
ISSN: 1833-1866
http://www.Arts-Journal.com

The International JOURNAL *of the* BOOK

Explores the past, present and future of books, publishing, libraries, information, literacy and learning in the information society.
ISSN: 1447-9567
http://www.Book-Journal.com

DESIGN PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES
An International Journal

Examines the meaning and purpose of 'design' while also speaking in grounded ways about the task of design and the use of designed artefacts and processes.
ISSN: 1833-1874
http://www.Design-Journal.com

The International JOURNAL *of* DIVERSITY in ORGANISATIONS, COMMUNITIES & NATIONS

Provides a forum for discussion and builds a body of knowledge on the forms and dynamics of difference and diversity.
ISSN: 1447-9583
http://www.Diversity-Journal.com

THE GLOBAL STUDIES JOURNAL

Maps and interprets new trends and patterns in globalisation.
ISSN 1835-4432
http://www.GlobalStudiesJournal.com

The International JOURNAL *of the* HUMANITIES

Discusses the role of the humanities in contemplating the future and the human, in an era otherwise dominated by scientific, technical and economic rationalisms.
ISSN: 1447-9559
http://www.Humanities-Journal.com

The International JOURNAL *of* LEARNING

Sets out to foster inquiry, invite dialogue and build a body of knowledge on the nature and future of learning.
ISSN: 1447-9540
http://www.Learning-Journal.com

The International JOURNAL *of* KNOWLEDGE, CULTURE & CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Creates a space for discussion of the nature and future of organisations, in all their forms and manifestations.
ISSN: 1447-9575
http://www.Management-Journal.com

The International JOURNAL *of the* INCLUSIVE MUSEUM

Addresses the key question: How can the institution of the museum become more inclusive?
ISSN 1835-2014
http://www.Museum-Journal.com

The International JOURNAL *of* INTERDISCIPLINARY SOCIAL SCIENCES

Discusses disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge creation within and across the various social sciences and between the social, natural and applied sciences.
ISSN: 1833-1882
http://www.Socialsciences-Journal.com

The International JOURNAL *of* ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC & SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Draws from the various fields and perspectives through which we can address fundamental questions of sustainability.
ISSN: 1832-2077
http://www.Sustainability-Journal.com

The International JOURNAL *of* TECHNOLOGY, KNOWLEDGE & SOCIETY

Focuses on a range of critically important themes in the various fields that address the complex and subtle relationships between technology, knowledge and society.
ISSN: 1832-3669
http://www.Technology-Journal.com

UBIQUITOUS LEARNING
An International Journal

Investigates the affordances for learning in the digital media, in school and throughout everyday life.
ISSN 1835-2030
http://www.ULJournal.com

JOURNAL *of the* World Universities Forum

Explores the meaning and purpose of the academy in times of striking social transformation.
ISSN 1835-2030
http://www.Universities-Journal.com

FOR SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT
subscriptions@commonground.com.au