

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING KANSAS COACHING PROJECT UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS JIM KNIGHT

THE PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP

Partnership is coming to be regarded as an empowering alternative to more common patriarchal models of human interaction. Today, in disciplines as diverse as anthropology, organizational theory, philosophy of science, and educational theory, theorists are constructing a new partnership mindset as an alternative to the traditional patriarchy model. Running through the writing in numerous disciplines are principles representing the foundation of a partnership world view. Those principles, described below, are also the foundation of the Partnership Learning approach to staff development:

Equality

Partnership involves relationships between equals. Thus each person's thoughts and beliefs are held to be valuable, and, although each individual is different, no individual decides for another. When this principle is applied to staff development, it means that all participants in a learning session are recognized as equal partners, and consequently no one's view is more important or valuable than anyone else's.

Choice

In a partnership, one individual does not make decisions for another. Because partners are equal, they make their own individual choices and make decisions collaboratively. When this principle is applied to staff development, it means that participant choice is implicit in every communication of content and, to the greatest extent possible, the process used to learn the content.

Voice

Partnership is multivocal rather than univocal, and all individuals in a partnership require opportunities to express their point of view. Indeed, a primary benefit of a partnership is

that each individual has access to a multiplicity of perspectives rather than the singular perspective of the patriarch. When this principle is applied to staff development, it means that all participants in a learning session have the freedom to express their opinions about content being covered. Furthermore, since opinions will inevitably vary, staff developers should encourage conversation that allows people the freedom to express a variety of opinions

Reflection

Offering workshop participants the freedom to consider ideas before adopting them is central to the principle of reflection within Partnership Learning. Indeed, reflective thinkers by definition have to be free to choose or reject ideas, or they simply are not thinkers at all. Reflection holds the potential of providing an opportunity for teachers to think about what Parker Palmer calls the “inner landscape of the teaching self.” Reflection can enable teachers to ask profound questions about what, how, why and who teaches.

Dialogue

To arrive at mutually acceptable decisions, partners engage in dialogue. In a partnership, one individual does not impose, dominate, or control. Partners engage in conversation, learning together as they explore ideas. When this principle is applied to staff development, it means that staff developers embrace dialogue rather than lecture. Facilitators avoid manipulation, engage participants in conversation about content, and think and learn with participants as everyone moves through content being discussed.

Praxis

The purpose of partnership is to enable individuals to have more meaningful experiences. In partnership relationships, meaning arises when people reflect on ideas and then put those actions into practice. A requirement for partnership is that each individual is free to reconstruct and use content the way he or she considers it most useful. When this principle is applied to staff development, it means that facilitators offer numerous opportunities for participants to reflect on the practical implications of new content being learned.

LEARNING STRUCTURES

The principles of Partnership Learning are embodied in six learning structures. These structures, described below, are each instructional methods that can be woven into any training session:

Thinking Devices

Thinking Devices are stimuli (e.g., film clip, story, vignette, audio clip, work of art, song, photograph, word, or concept) that a trainer presents to a group of learners to elicit responses and prompt dialogue. Thinking Devices can be used for a variety of teaching purposes, including introducing major sections of content or surfacing and/or validating prior knowledge of participants.

Question Recipes

Question Recipes are: (a) open-ended, that is, questions that prompt responses that are detailed, and (b) nonjudgmental, that is, questions that elicit responses that are neither right nor wrong. When using Question Recipes, a facilitator draws from a list of questions that he or she uses routinely during the session to promote dialogue. Example Question Recipes are: “How do you see this working?”; “Tell me more about that...”; “What would prevent you from doing _____?”; and “How do you feel about _____?”

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning involves group learning activities that are mediated by learners. Learners are given specific roles to perform, and group members have shared goals.

Experiential Learning

Experiential Learning involves structured learning activities that simulate the instructional method or other content about which participants are learning. Thus, learners participating in Experiential Learning activities actually “liveout”; the content about which they are learning. For example, teachers who are learning about the Sentence Writing Strategy could be asked to write a few sentences and then discuss the thinking they used during their personal experience of writing complete sentences. Similarly, teachers learning about the Test-Taking Strategy might be given a test to

complete and then be prompted to discuss how they felt about and strategically approached the test.

Reflection Learning

Reflection Learning involves activities that explicitly prompt participants to consider and explore how the new method, practice, or other content being learning can be applied to their personal or professional lives. An example of a Reflection Learning structure is to provide teachers with time to create Unit Organizers for content units they are planning to teach.

Stories

Stories are short (3 minutes or less) anecdotes or narratives that facilitators include in their sessions to enhance delivery of content. Stories can provide background information, examples and nonexamples, advance information, analogical anchors, personal or group contexts for learning, and so on.