Mentoring Course in Samara:  April 6- April 21 2000

I.  Mentoring Skills as Gateway to Trainer Training.
Teaching the mentoring course gave me an opportunity to gain practical insights into the structure of a trainer training course.

At the annual SELP conference in Odessa last December, the SPELT teacher trainers viewed the mentoring skills course as the gateway to the trainer training course (which includes presentation skills, action research projects with emphasis on literature). Our experience in Samara clearly demonstrates why the work on mentoring skills has to precede the other components of a trainer training course.

In the first module last October, the seminar time was used to focus on the framework for providing non-judgemental feedback (see November report).  Through roleplays the participants began to acquire the skills of providing constructive feedback.

Thus the classroom observation of each other between October and April took place on a solid and supportive footing.  In our first session in April, small groups brainstormed the issues that had arisen for them in their observations.  I had a print out of all the observations that had been sent to me via e-mail and distributed them before the discussion.  The issues were naturally categorized into mentoring, teaching and learning (see handout: Issues from Observations).  The discussion of the teaching showed mutual respect and regard.

The next phase of the April seminar  had been decided upon in the individual  e-mail contact and somewhat spontaneously during the seminar.  About half of the participants presented excerpts of video tapes or audio tapes of their teaching and invited suggestions from the group.  Here is where it became apparent to me how much the work done in October had paid off.  The class evolved into a trusting and supportive group who the teachers could open up to.  This exposure of vulnerability would have been unthinkable at the beginning of the course.  And the participants were grateful for any suggestions about how to tackle specific problems they had identified.  This development helped me to achieve a personal goal of getting the seminar participants to speak with each other during a whole group discussion rather than having the discussion channeled through the teacher.

The process of a classroom was also helped by two other features of the course:  the concept of individualization  and teacher development.

Via e-mail contact I was able to guide the structure of the observations as the participants completed the five assignments.  Often, especially when the process was truly sequential, key issues emerging from the observations became the source for the action research project. Sometimes the observations were even more directly tied to the action research projects in that the observer looked at a specific aspect of the lesson from the vantage point of classroom research, either the observer's or the teachers's whose class was being observed.

In addition, during my visit to Samara I met with each of the 16 participants individually for

an hour.  Key areas covered were work and professional development experience, training goals and the action research projects.   The information that I obtained let me have a much broader picture of the participants. I also attended four presentations by participants of their action research projects in Hugh's class  (the concurrent, year-long, SPELT teacher training course at the second level [methodology]).   Finally, I served as a resource person for two sixth-grade classes of one of the participants.  They were completing posters on Russian and American customs.

Through this individualized instruction it was possible for me to pull from each of the participants according to their experience and expertise in a class discussion, and eventually have this turn into a free discussion as the participants learned more about each other.  This actualized a second concern of mine (in addition to fostering a lateral discussion), since the January workshop at the Petnica Science Center, of creating a learning environment where participants could set their own goals.  On the handout: Some Ideas about Teaching and Mentoring,  with citations related to educational practice, I made the distinction between teacher training (assigned seminars) and teacher development  (self-generated). Yulia visited this class and provided the feedback that this discussion  was particularly helpful.  On the handout teacher development is compared to learner autonomy.  Largely through the greater individualization made possible in this course, it was possible to bridge the gap between teacher training and teacher development.

As Caroline Bodoczky has said repeatedly, it is a powerful course because we begin to wrestle with our belief and value system.   I noticed in the seminar that the deeper held beliefs and value systems started to come to the foreground and become a subject of debate.

Shifting paradigms were really the theme of the course.  Initially this began with research carried out by the participants about the learning styles of their students.  In two presentations it was noted that the students were authority centered or did not like to engage in active experimentation.   The question then turned from finding out more about the students (and the validity of the data) to how to bring them over to the teacher's paradigm about effective learning--how, for example, to teach learner responsibility.  Next in talking about experience with supervisors it was generally agreed in the class that the mentoring they were used to is based on mistakes and pluses.   By this point the benefit of constructive discussion was very clear to us. Gradually this model shifted to ourselves.  By seeking out professional development opportunities, the participants are seeking to define their objectives as teachers.  When they set their own professional and personal development goals, as described above, they are shifting their own paradigm from their current approach to their constructed ideal.  They are then encouraged to innovate rather than saying that 'this is the model we are used to'.  Indeed discussions around this issue were some of the most passionate in the course.

This process entails an important underlying psychological component.  As the participants allowed themselves to open up to the group, their personalities  came more and more to the foreground.  Actually, I think this is probably what a climate of trust produces.  When we speak of personality traits, we enter an inviolable domain.  In the context of professional

development that the seminar provided, it seemed to me that personality traits entered the discussion, as strengths or weaknesses that needed to be taken into account in accomplishing the stated objectives. Indeed, one participant defined the aim of the course in these terms:

> "The aim of the course as I see it, was to extend our knowledge of the impact of our teaching, to help teachers to discover strengths and weaknesses in order to determine appropriate future actions." (S11).

This applied no less to me as a facilitator, in a situation where truly the role of the seminar leader changes--more like a coach of highly tuned athletes, helping them to fine-tune their talents   As a result, the course became a very important learning process for me, in particular as it actualized most of the important concepts that had evolved for me in the course of teacher training this past academic year. At the same time, it made the teaching of the course a particularly rewarding experience.   Concerning the art of facilitating a trainer training course, I find these experiences echoed in *Mentor Course*s and *Readings in Teacher Developmen*t:

> "On a course where modeling is a specific course objective it is essential that leaders practise what they preach, and model the kind of modeling mentors are expected to perform. Broadly speaking, this involves matching what is taught and how it is taught. This is what we mean by congruence of training. More specifically, it will involve the course leader in modeling reflective practice and making explicit the application of theories in their practice and the influence of that practice on their theories. I addition they need to model attention to relationship management; professionalism and commitment to their own professional development; as well as the ability to fashion the course to the needs of the group." (MC: 25)

> "A person centred approach to teaching and learning means that the teacher values and uses the personal knowledge and experience of each group member."(RTD: 42)

Another specific aspect of the mentoring skills course was to prepare the ground for the trainer training course to follow. In this regard, the close group rapport that ensued and the fact that every participant expressed an interest in such a course on the course evaluation are encouraging. One impact of this preparation was determining literature that we could obtain for the participants. In Odessa the SPELT teacher trainers agreed that the action research component for the trainer training course should contain a greater reference to contemporary literature. The need to make such literature available was also a natural development of the individualization process or the fact that the participants began to become specialists in their particular field of interest.

Finally, another key feature of the course was the focus on authenticity, including the task of thinking ahead to how mentoring and trainer training skills would be used. Among other things, this meant preparing the participants to actually give presentations at TESOL

conferences and present their own workshops.  Although the participants were quite advanced teachers, hardly anyone expressed confidence in doing this.  A large part of the course then will have to focus on confidence-building.  In this regard, I think it is best to start with very informal presentations, as took place with the screening of the teaching videos and audio material in the mentoring course.  A formal presentation is off-putting, and probably will follow in a very natural way from the informal presentations.  Two of the participants had contributed to the annual TESOL conference in March, but only by reading a 10-minute paper to a panel of 15 people.  There is no reason why either of these participants could not have given a workshop in their own right.   The other feature of the seminar that lent it authenticity was the extension of the classroom to the classes the participants were actually teaching.  This occurred through the audio and video tapes, classroom visits and discussion.

Let me sum up what the essential components of  the trainer training course are, based on my experience teaching the mentoring skills course in Samara this year.

1. Initial focus on non-judgemental feedback:  discussion of criteria for observations; role-playing; trust building.

2. Mutual observations.

3. Individualization through interviews and Internet contact with the instructor, through presentations, getting to know participants, pulling them into the discussion until everyone becomes aware of the other's expertise.

4. Stress on Teacher Development:  recommended book:  *Readings in Teacher Development* (1997) Kathie Head and Pauline Taylor, Heinemann [see handout: Booklist for a review of this book, which I believe should be the key coursebook for the trainer training course].

5. Video viewing of teachers teaching, including course participants.

6. A focus on changing paradigms in a changing world--discussion of general educational practices:  what is literacy in the knowledge economy of the 21st century and how does this impact on our outcome objectives?  The setting of goals beyond the confines of the classroom.

7. Focus on literature for further development of participant specialties; issues arise as in qualitative research.

8. Authenticity:  Learner-centered; project work, relying on individual expertise; preparation for real-world training opportunities; involving teaching practice.

9. The role of the facilitator:  an appreciation of the underlying psychological significance of such a course.

II.  APRIL CURRICULUM

a)  Setting of goals in first handout:  focus rather than syllabus.  A beginning statement of expectations (at Yulia's urging--this provided a focus for the seminar but left room for the participants and emerging themes to shape it).  [see Mentoring Module 3: Syllabus]

b)  The basis for the course was really the discussion that had gone on between me and them via the Internet in the intervening four months and the discussion among themselves as they visited each other's classes.  We then started out by clarifying which issues arose from the observations.  It seemed natural to put these into three categories:  learning, teaching and mentoring.  [see Issues from Observations].`

c)  The action research project for the mentoring skills course was simply to draw up a proposal for a project that could reasonably be carried out in the coming academic year.  The theme, means of collecting and evaluating data and time frame were to be included.  Those who participated in Hugh's concurrent course, were to revisit their action research projects and refine it for the coming year, looking towards a TESOL workshop.

d)  CETT video of student teachers having a difficult time getting a discussion going despite the use of group work and project work:  material for  a very interesting discussion!  The most important point of such a video is that it is not showing model teaching, which as the authors of *Mentor Courses* point out can be threatening.  It was an opportunity to talk about educational practices and mentoring skills all at once.  We role-played a meeting between mentor, mentee and observer after the viewing and class discussion..

e)  Video tapes of actual classroom teaching:  continue to use/ build group dynamics first.  Professional and personal growth:  opening up-- important to have role plays first, to thoroughly discuss the significance of non-judgemental feedback.

f)  I used a a few pages of Dr. Seuss *Red Fish, Blue Fish*, to illustrate phonics--related to pattern recognition and questions like whether long explanations in Russian to teach grammar are necessary.

g)  Intrinsic Motivation.  A checklist provided by Aaron Carlson [see Handout], source:  H.D. Brown (1994) *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*.   A beautiful example of two things--getting the teacher out of center stage and having a checklist that probes the reasons for what we do what we do rather than the right/wrong checklist the participants say they are used to. (One discussion we had was on  methodologist telling a school teacher that it was a mistake to repeat what the pupils said.  Participants immediately said that this depended on the particular situation.  We reached agreement that without a discussion, this kind of statement is simply not helpful.)  We used this checklist to address questions that arose in the videotapes.

h)  Educational Practices.  [ See handout: Some ideas about teaching and mentoring]  I started the discussion on this a few times and only finished in the last session.  I had distributed four

of the texts cited among all of the participants so that each class member only had one article to read or scan prior to the session on this topic.  In the last session, different participants could summarize or reflect on material in their particular handout:

> de Castell, Susan and Allan Luke (1983) Defining Literacy in North American Schools,  *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 373-89.
>
> Puttnam, David (2000) A Place to Learn a Refuge and a Home, *Newsweek Special Issue*, p.110
>
> What Grade is Betsy, from Fisher, D.C. (1917) *Understood Betsy*, pp 56-61
>
> The Good Reader, from *McGuffey's Fifth Reader* (1879, 1920),  pp. 39-43

i)  Selection from *Techniques in Clinical Supervision of Teacher*s, 3rd ed., Keith A. Acheson, et al (1992):  The Planning Conference; The Feedback Conference; Leadership Style and Roles, pp. 66-76.  This material from a standard textbook in the United States for teaching practice, reenforced the notion of giving constructive feedback.

j)  Creating a Learning Environment, chpt. 10 from R. Fisher (1995) *Teaching Children to Learn*, Stanley Thornes Press.  This chapter discusses the external factors to the classroom, like school improvement plans, community and parental involvement.  It led to an excellent discussion on the relationship between teachers and parents.

k)  Models of Teacher Learning, handout about three types of models for learning how to teach, the craft model, the applied science model and the reflective model.  The source is three fold:  pp. 187-191 in *Mentor Courses,* which supplied study questions to a section from Penny Ur's *A Course in Language Teaching*;  her section is in turn based on Wallace (1993).

l) Booklist [see handout].  This was used to collect titles and topics for literature needed by participants for their research areas.  Added to the list were topics of the AR project.  It also contains an excellent review of *Readings in Teacher Development* by Simon Gill, which I then purchased when I returned to Budapest.

m)  Personal Development Goals.  My own goals in the seminar were to foster more lateral communication and tighten the congruity between my beliefs about getting the teacher out of center stage and how I actually conduct a seminar. In addition I had a further goal of learning to transfer visual media to print, which opens up far greater opportunities than a word-processing program.  I was able to add a butterfly logo to the official certificate and to the first handout stating expectations for the course, and compose the handout summarizing the discussion on observations in a way that sooner correlates to the brainstorming activity itself. The programs I am learning are WWW design programs that I was introduced to at the Petnica Science Center.  It is an example of setting goals beyond the confines of the lesson.

n)  Individualization:  Just to give a feel of how the interviews extended my knowledge base

for the course, here is one excerpt from every participant. The interviews are on file, along with the rest of the course material, in Samara, and should be helpful for the teacher trainer who teaches the trainer training course in the 2000/2001 academic year.

1. Olga A: "Make parents feel like partners rather than like objects."
2. Valeria: "When a pupil in Russia raises his hand, it means he wants to leave the room."
3. Natalia K.: "Young learners have a short attention span, need to wiggle."
4. Kira: Some students are active "because I ask them to be" but not because of their own motivation.
5. Vitalina: Her 8-year old daughter: "You have time to teach everyone but me!"
6. Larissa: Her son has been taking a course for two years to prepare him for a very difficult entrance exam, to a specialized school. He is seven years old.
7. Jelena T. "You are invited to be creative, but you better be successful!"
8. Galena: For a competition, she was asked to teach a demonstration lesson to very tough sixth graders. When she said 'good morning' they did not even look up. Then she sang she wrote about animals in Australia. They looked up. She won the competition.
9. Yuri: "There are not such problems at Gymnasium #1--but I have a more real picture of the world."
10. Julia L. When you live without mail, you just don't know...[impetus to buy computer].
11. Kate: The most successful way of teaching grammar is "largely induction with a well placed generalization by the teacher at the right time."
12. Olga S. Olga wrote plays for her elementary school pupils, to introduce them to American holidays at a time when any extra material was very difficult to come by.
13. Jelena Y. Jelena taught social studies at a high school in Maryland for five weeks last year.
14. Jelena Z. Jelena has produced a plan for mentoring three new faculty at the Aerospace University. It has been approved and she is quite excited about implementing it.
15. Albina: How do you actually define teacher domination and interaction?
16. Natalia M. As a school psychologist, she produced a complex chart of a teacher's learning styles, to help the teacher individualize the lessons. Her major at university was Russian Language and Literature and then Psychology. She has not studied English as a major.

o) Criteria for selection [see handout]. These were agreed upon with Yulia and mentioned to the participants.

p) Metaphors. Participants gave their metaphors for their role as mentor at the beginning of the course in October. In the last class, we revisited these to see which had changed.

q) Resources devoted to course. I believe another important reason for the positive group rapport was the appreciation by the participants of the resources devoted to this course. As

S16 says in her feedback, the participants felt privileged. Larry Jarocki gave a special workshop for the participants during his February visit to Samara, with special emphasis on group dynamics. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The teacher trainer Hugh Crumley gave special Internet workshops; there was a continuous Internet contact between the facilitator and participants; my second two-week visit to the Samara was devoted solely to this course; a summer workshop without expense to the participants was an integral part of the course; the SELP coordinator was present at a number of classes, including the last class where certificates were awarded with a champagne celebration.


## III. Participant Evaluation of Seminar

The evaluation form was agreed on with the SELP coordinator and then distributed at the end of the last session. After distributing the form, I read over the questions and asked if they were understood. Then I left the room for 10 minutes. There were 15 respondents. One of the participants was absent. But as one person who had otherwise not attended the second session in April, and was not awarded a certificate, filled out a questionnaire, there must have been one person who did not complete the form, as there were 16 people present at the last session.

Part I. Likert scale questions. "To what extent did the seminar help you to develop:"

| | |
|---|---|
| Skills as a mentor | 4.1 |
| Skills as an observer | 4,6 |
| Ability to discuss profession | 4,4 |
| Ability to determine your professional development goals | 4.0 |
| Ability to express learning outcome objectives | 4.0 |
| Ability to develop material to give workshops to teachers | 3.7 |
| Ability to use the Internet for meaningful correspondence | 4.1 |

Part II. Additional Comments

S1 The seminars gave me a good opportunity to believe in myself as a good teacher, quite experienced, the teacher who acquired much and who is eager to continue the job as a teacher trainer. In spite of the fact that I'm a school teacher, I guess I'll manage to work with the teachers to share my thoughts and experiences with them, to implement all my material in future teaching. R. Fisher's book about creating learning environment impressed me and proved that I'm on the right way. I follow practically all that book's advice. Thank you!!!

S2 To tell the truth, some sessions were really useful for me, when we watched video in order to observe and give feedback. Thanks a lot for the handouts which helped me not only in professional development, but also in planning the lessons for the students. But the main thing I'd like to notice is sharing our experience with colleagues, cooperation which was really helpful in self-assessment and evaluation of other teachers' classes.

S3 I think the Internet and observations as well as planning an action research project were of great help in connecting the October session with April classes. The thing is that in October

our goals seemed rather vague, and they became clearer through the work via Internet. I also found our April discussion much more useful and idea-building in the light of all our course. Like a child, it (I mean the project) grew to a more mature being by the end of our course and this is a success. The only thing I would like to point out is that we should be given some more particular techniques in organizing our workshops and presentations.

S4  I'm very thankful to the opportunity to the teacher and other colleagues to be one of the group. To listen, to express my ideas, to observe.  It was very helpful for me. I'll share my experiences with the other teachers at my school.

S5  To my mind it was quite a helpful and informative course. And the main value of it is that I used the materials and information given during the course during my classes. But I'm awfully sorry that I wasn't told about the time of April classes and missed so much information.

S6  The course provided very good ethos. The teacher is able to make everyone feel at home; it was really warm--relaxing--just the atmosphere to make ideas about dealing with the young generation. It was definitely a reflective model when we were talking about the things that concerned us.

I think that good planning beforehand would still have improved the course even more. I think it would have enabled us to touch upon much more problems than we managed to, and to do it in greater depth. The handouts were very good. The overall impression is nice.

S7  Trevor! Thanks a lot for your support. I couldn't imagine you'd appreciate my project so high. The course you taught contributed greatly to my professional development. Before than I have been learning from my own experience. Now I've got a powerful theoretical input which changed my mode of thinking. I'd never thought of putting things that way before (I mean the whole idea of mentoring). I enjoyed listening to others discussing different points. I learned a lot from it though I wasn't an active participant myself. But what impressed me most is communication via Internet. It's great people can share information with colleagues from all over the world, getting positive feedback. I hope our communication will continue.

S8  I picked up a few very interesting ideas, rather many new terms that are in use in modern American methodology. Besides, Trevor himself is absolutely charming both as a man and as an instructor. I've gained much from communicating with him. [I would be interested to get more information about the CEELT exam.]

S9  I feel I have a true partner and helper who is always here for us even though we are on opposite sides of the world. I became wiser and more rich in my understanding of mentoring. I never forget philosophy of butterfly and our collaboration. Thank you very much for teaching. You did a great job. "Thanks for understanding and believing in me too. Thanks for being wonderful--Thanks for being you!"

S10  I enjoyed everything we did, but I wish to dwell on the problem of conflict resolution

yet. Trevor! Thanks for creating such inspiring atmosphere. You and your seminar made me interact with my colleagues. I saw that I'm not alone. I evaluated my advantages and saw my drawbacks I need to improve. Thank you for unfolding the wings of butterfly.

S11  The aim of the course as I see it, was to extend our knowledge of the impact of our teaching, to help teachers to discover strengths and weaknesses in order to determine appropriate future actions. All handouts are very helpful.

S12 I am not fully satisfied with the course as personally I don't find it professionally rewarding. There was no deep and serious grounding on mentoring, no authentic observations done by professionals; the only thing that I got from here--some useful books and articles on teaching and mentoring and a chance to discuss profession.

S13 The course give me an impulse for my own developing--comprising a lot of things: critical thinking; skills in computing; communicating through the Internet, etc. Some new ideas concerning  teaching and sharing experience with younger teachers struck my mind. I'm going to realize them. Thank you very much. Trevor! I really appreciate your creative and non-judgmental way of conducting classes!

S14 I think most effective from the point of view of mentoring was observing video episodes in class with following feedback. It was both observation and mentoring practice. Our simulation mentor-mentee-observer was also very practical giving some simulation of a real situation. Besides "mentee" tried to play different roles (stubborn, indifferent, etc.) giving opportunity for psychological insight. [The CEELT exam preparation could be very interesting.]

S15  I enjoyed the idea of observing video classes; it was a valuable experience for us, a chance to solve problems together. The idea of mentoring is extremely interesting but on the other hand the curriculum of this course doesn't seem to be quite logically prepared. The concept wasn't quite cleared out. Anyway, this course gave me a lot of food for thought. It enlarged my professional outlook and turned out to be a good step in the process of personal development.

S16 [Feedback sent  via Internet by the participant who was unable to attend the last class] Sorry, I had to miss the last classes. For EL teachers of Samara that training course was a nice opportunity to develop their professional skills. All of us who participated in the course feel privileged. It was not until after the completion of the mentoring course that I came to the appreciation of what I personally gained from it. First of all, it is awareness through which I can improve my teaching. Secondly, now I am part of a group of teachers who share common beliefs about teaching and I know where to find help if I need it. It's good to have colleagues you can rely on. We need each other; we are the ones who are willing to collaborate with each other. Finally, we were introduced to a new world of Internet with its vast untapped resource for classroom use. Those are just a few things I can think of right now; I am sure there are many more. I would like to thank you for the wonderful opportunity to develop professionally.

Part III. Interest in attending additional Soros teacher development seminars with special emphasis on teacher trainings: 100%

**Discussion**. The feedback mirrors my impressions for the course while providing helpful, specific information.

In the first part, it was to be expected that the participants would express least confidence in their ability to prepare materials for a workshop (3.6). It is somewhat surprising for me that their confidence in their observation skills (4.6) was rather higher than their confidence in their ability to discuss the profession with colleagues (4.4). I would have liked to see their appraisal of their skills as mentors higher than 4.0. Perhaps this helps to underline the point made by Caroline Bodoczky in *Mentor Courses* that lots of role plays are necessary. Encouraging is the fact that they rated their ability to use the Internet at the same level, despite doubt at the beginning of the course last autumn among most participants in their ability to master this medium.

The questionnaire was designed that they assess their actual abilities in areas that were addressed in the course. The comments that they offered helped to make their response/reaction to various elements in the course clearer.

The criticism offered is what I would call friendly criticism. The general tone of the remarks and their assessment of the course are quite positive. In keeping with the highest percentage given to confidence in their observation skills on the first part, a number of their comments make reference to the discussion of teaching videos that teachers brought in of themselves teaching and the supportive atmosphere for that (S1-S4; S6-S7; S10-11; S13; S14; S15).

One teacher put the aims of the course in a beautifully succinct way: "The aim of the course as I see it, was to extend our knowledge of the impact of our teaching, to help teachers to discover strengths and weaknesses in order to determine appropriate future actions." (S11).

Another touched on a concrete area of exploration that came up in discussions, but did not have an opportunity to explore: "I enjoyed everything we did, but I wish to dwell on the problem of conflict resolution yet." (S10). This notion of conflict resolution obviously came up through the simulation as expressed by S14: "Besides "mentee" tried to play different roles (stubborn, indifferent, etc.) giving opportunity for psychological insight." In future we could have role plays where the mentee is given a specific role, to be stubborn, etc., and then explore how we deal with the situation. This would provide an opportunity to explore conflict resolution while providing a chance to critically appraise the notion of 'non-judgemental feedback' when the student teacher is not quite aware of her teaching practices.

The most serious complaint was that of coherence. One participant (S12) expresses her dissatisfaction with the course. For her a solid framework for discussion was lacking. This is the only negative overall assessment, also revealed in S12's response to the first part (2,2,3,2,2,1,2) [There were otherwise no '1's and three '2's, one for ability to give workshops,

one for ability to use the Internet, and one for ability to express outcome objectives.] Still there is an echo in three other participants' feedback about the need for more coherence in the course. Participant S6 states: " I think that good planning beforehand would still have improved the course even more. I think it would have enabled us to touch upon much more problems than we managed to, and to do it in greater depth." Participant S15 states: "The idea of mentoring is extremely interesting but on the other hand the curriculum of this course doesn't seem to be quite logically prepared. The concept wasn't quite cleared out." Both of these respondents nonetheless praise the atmosphere and the course overall. One participant gives another perspective on this (S3), saying that the goals which were vague in October, became clear in April. She also found the discussion in April: " much more useful and idea-building in the light of all our course." This is particularly encouraging for me, because the discussion in April involved among other things the deeper pedagogical principles at work in our teaching. This same participant also mentions the need for " more particular techniques in organizing our workshops and presentations."

This was in many respects an experimental course. As it developed in April there was more room for individualization, partly through the individual tutorial sessions I had with each of the participants. Issues were also self-generated, through the action research projects and through the discussion of the video-tapes and audio-tapes that half of the participants brought in about their lessons. The fact that so many participants had material that they wanted to share also influenced the evolution of the course. One of the very important aspects of the course as it evolved was the emphasis on self-directed teacher development. As I make clear elsewhere in this report, I personally gained a much deeper understanding of the requirements and structure of a trainer training course. There is certainly room for structuring the course from the beginning so that the participants' need for structure is better honored, as expressed here in the feedback.

It is especially encouraging they every one of the participants is interested in a trainer training seminar. Overall, I think we can say that a group rapport ensued that can be built on in further seminars.

IV.  Conclusions

I believe the experience with the mentoring skills course provides a blueprint for trainer training, in keeping with the decision made at the 1999 annual SELP conference to provide the principles rather than a set curriculum.  The nine points at the conclusion to section 1) indicate the components of such a course, while the curriculum in section 2) outlines the particular curriculum for the mentoring skills course in Samara.  A course in mentoring skills can be viewed as the transition stage between the second-year SPELT methodology course and the third-year teacher training course.  Recommended books for the trainer training course are *Mentor Courses* and *Readings in Teacher Development*.

A few long-term questions were raised with regard to the trainer training course.  Concerning OSI support, which opportunities can actually be provided for the graduates?  How can access to necessary literature be provided?  Can CEELT exam preparation be provided simultaneously and if so can support funds be found for taking the exam?  In Samara all of the participants expressed an interest in preparing for this internationally recognized exam.  Offering it in conjunction with the trainer training course was another decision reached at the 1999 annual SELP conference.

Other support resources include video-taping equipment and access to Internet-capable computer labs.

There are further long-term questions related to the interaction between SELP and SPELT.  Ideally a data bank could be set up to track the future career progress of the graduates.  This would facilitate research and subsequent grant writing.  The establishment of a databank, however, would probably need to be linked to a long-term plan that envisioned the evolution of SELP programs as educational institutions, either self-standing or integrated into existing institutions.

The image that I leave Samara with is of "The English Classroom,"  an image that will stay with me for a long time, like Olga's sixth grade classroom:

> Despite difficult circumstances, Olga has managed to create a warm,
> supportive, colorful environment in the classroom.  She enjoys an extremely
> good rapport with the pupils.  A poster over the door had two Garfield like
> cats pointing at each other with the caption "You are responsible."  There are a
> variety of posters and decorations on the wall.  The largest, a bulletin board
> that spans the width of the room, was created by students about the holiday
> Valentine's Day.  It was filled with postcards, pictures, etc.

It is a kind of sanctuary, where the free expression of ideas is encouraged and the individual voice respected.  It is an exemplification of the fact that challenge creates opportunity where professional teachers are committed to their task and ready to master change, as expressed in the following statement of purpose to participate in the summer mentoring workshop:

Professional development of a teacher is impossible without his/her being aware of the  need for changes. The mentoring course in Samara helped its participants to gain such  awareness through self-observation, through observation of other teachers' teaching and through action research. There are, however, hundreds of EFL teachers in Samara who did not have a chance to attend the course and remain 'unaware'. Therefore, I see sharing with my colleagues the knowledge and experience I have gained through the mentoring course in Samara and will hopefully gain from the workshop in Romania as part of my job.

I hope that the thousand points of light represented by the Educational Advising Center in Samara, Russia, can continue to nurture such positive change.   The SPELT teacher training course is an integral part of widespread ongoing activities to provide local trainers and the resources needed to help dedicated English teachers achieve their vision.

I would like to express my gratitude to the SELP coordinator, Yulia Markushina, for making the course possible and providing such rich support.  In accomplishing what she has accomplished, she has accomplished quite a lot.  As a participant put it on the last day of class:

If you're non-judgmental, it just means you respect your mentee--not abuse him that he did something wrong.  The more we observe others, the more it inspires us to build our framework together.

Trevor Shanklin
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