

“A Practical Introduction to Teacher Training in ELT” by John Hughes

(Book Review)

Martin Sketchley

When I first got involved in teacher training, the only support and advice available was via my line managers or from other more experienced teachers. However, I felt a sense of excitement when I received “A Practical Introduction to Teacher Training in ELT”, as this book would have been a perfect supplement all those years ago when I was organising and planning teacher training sessions with my newly appointed young learner teachers. The book, published by Pavilion Publications, is aimed at teacher trainers or those that wish to become teacher trainers.

This book is organised into six main chapters which are logically organised and guide the reader through different components of teacher training within the profession of ELT. As you start reading, you are introduced to the author, John Hughes, with the key titles he has contributed towards. You can find out a bit more about the author on his personal blog: www.johnhugheselt.com. Prior to the first chapter, an introduction provides the reader with an insight into how the book is organised, reader self-reflective questions, terminology used within the book, photocopyable pages – which can also be downloaded from the [publisher’s website](#) – as well as final acknowledgements.

Chapter one, pages 13-31, “*Teacher training for the first time*”, introduces potential teacher trainers or those with limited training experience, to the routes of becoming a teacher trainer, ways of working towards being a trainer, key considerations when moving into training, and the different training contexts, as well as the skills required. Within each of the sections above, the reader is encouraged to answer reflective questions. It is noted that the author has incorporated a variety of avenues into training such as running workshops, mentoring or in-house training. Towards the end of the first chapter, there is a downloadable, and photocopyable, worksheet, “*Teacher development action plan*”, that readers can complete in preparation for planning the next steps of teacher training.

The second chapter, pages 33-72, “*Training techniques*”, looks at preparing for input sessions, techniques that are used within input sessions, selecting and combining input session techniques, and appropriate classroom layouts. The author encourages the reader to plan the training session with three key considerations: “*What is the definition of the training session?*”, “*Why is the subject of this session important?*”, and “*How will attendees apply aspects after the training session?*” (p.33-34). It seems simple enough, yet for inexperienced teacher trainers, the questions posed would have supported me when planning my initial training sessions. There are additional considerations suggested for the reader, with some nod towards the use of technology within teacher training (webinars, YouTube demonstrations, etc.).

Chapter three, pages 73-95, “*Lesson planning and preparing teaching practice*”, considers the approach to planning and preparation, the provision of input on lesson plans, pre-service lesson planning and teaching practice, experience and in-service planning and teaching practice, as well as assessing the plan. The chapter attempts to provide the potential trainer with an insight towards offering support for lesson planning for varying purposes. There are a range of areas to consider for the training of lesson planning and the writing of lesson planning, such as defining lesson aims, assessing plans, or the staging of lessons depending upon the skills that are being considered to be taught.

The fourth chapter, pages 97-125, “*Observing lessons*”, is a natural development from the previous chapter. The author considers five areas of lesson observations: the reasons for observing lessons, the trainer observing, observations for assessment, trainees and teachers observing, and the types of observation forms. The photocopyable/downloadable “*Trainer’s observation form*” is a valuable tool for the trainer who has to observe trainees. The considerations given for observations is an added value for the reader and there are many suggestions that should be incorporated. There is also equal attention given to trainees who are required to undertake peer observations, and photocopyable/downloadable formats are provided. There is much offered within chapter four and is well worth the investment of reading.

Chapter five, pages 127-143, “*Giving feedback*”, looks at the process of providing insight and reflection on observed lessons and teaching practice. There are six areas that are considered: the language of feedback, techniques for giving feedback, ways of organising feedback, examples of feedback situations, and written feedback as well as follow-up tasks from feedback. As can be appreciated, there is plenty of advice regarding the provision of feedback for the reader. It is also refreshing to see more practical solutions towards feedback, including the “*sandwich feedback*” (p.133).

The final chapter, pages 145-166, “*Managing teacher training*”, offers the reader five aspects to consider: the benefits of offering in-house training, designing a staff training programme, managing external training courses, assessment and feedback, and managing the trainers. It prepares the reader for developing an environment conducive for teacher training as well as developing a successful training plan, whatever the context.



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The final section of the book, "Further reading and resources", pages 167-168, offers the reader additional sources for reading, to be better placed to learn more about the subject of teacher training, with links to additional web-based resources without forgetting essential reading and reference to books.

Overall, the book will provide the reader with practical advice in preparation for the role associated of a teacher trainer, whether it is for pre-service teacher training or for in-house teacher training. It is incredibly insightful and offers advice as well as additional considerations for training and professional development for all practitioners involved within teacher training. It is highly recommended for those who are either experienced or not within the area of teacher training and professional development.



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“Mentoring teachers to research their classrooms: a practical handbook”: British Council (Book Review)

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Many teachers are aware of the benefit of conducting research as well as some of the potential drawbacks that could be encountered. Practitioners are able to draw upon inspiration from colleagues and their students, as well as support from mentors, with little available reference material for mentors to guide teachers towards research. “Mentoring teachers to research their classrooms: a practical handbook”, authored by Richard Smith and published by the British Council, attempts to bridge this gap.

The book is organised into twelve chapters, which is further split into two parts: **Part I Mentoring foundations** (Chapters 1-6) and **Part II The process of teacher-research** (Chapters 7-12). The first six chapters guide the reader through by introducing teacher research, the method of mentoring, how mentoring is connected with teacher research, establishing who a mentor may support, organising a timeframe for research and keeping a record as well as reflecting on and documenting as a mentor. Each of the first six chapters offers the reader the chance to ponder on relevant questions and, with enough space, to personally document answers.

The second part of the book, ‘*The process of teacher-research*’, offers the potential mentor a possibility to aid the teacher, conducting possible research, to choose a topic. Chapter 8 allows the reader to develop naturally towards potential research questions to develop while Chapter 9 supports the mentor/practitioner to prepare for teachers to collect data. The following Chapter logically develops the readers towards getting the teacher researchers to analyse and interpret data. Chapter 11 then focuses on how a change in classroom teaching based upon the research findings could be evaluated, while the final chapter looks at how a mentor could research findings and why it is an important element.

All of the chapters within the book prompt the readers to answer questions (with plenty space to write notes as well as an answer key at the end of the book), and offers advice about the various aspects of teacher research, with additional videos that can be accessed by scanning the relevant QR code. Additional resources are offered throughout the book with links to additional resources and websites within the PDF book. As the QR code is printed within a digital copy of the book, I had to use my phone’s camera to scan the QR code, be sent to the relevant link and then share the weblink to my computer. It would have been more convenient had the author included a hyperlink to the videos underneath the QR codes.

Overall, this free online publication, from the [British Council Teaching English website](#), is very thorough and supports mentors through all the necessary steps required to support teachers with their own research and does a superb task of logically enticing reflection every step of the way. Furthermore, the book is written in a style which is accessible and refreshing for readers as it is neither academic nor overly convoluted. This is a pleasant surprise considering the subject. Mentors and teacher trainers will find this book invaluable in encouraging teachers to research, with practical ideas and techniques on how this could be achieved.



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