Establishing ground rules in the classroom

Having explored the three methods of setting ground rules during session 2 of PTTLS course, it is evident that for the ground rules to be effective, determining the appropriate method of ground rules setting is crucial to informing how the learners will be likely to respond to the ' ground rules' and how this will later affect the session or sessions to be delivered. The three methods of setting ground rules offer advantages and disadvantages depending on the context of the lesson and the dynamics of the group.

For example theteacherled process provides the teacher with a clear set of uniformed rules and offers the teacher an opportunity to consider issues which may otherwise have been overlooked such as the learningenvironmentandhealthand safety issues. Although rigid in approach, using this method could offer the teacher more control of the group by notion of a hierarchal order within the class. The teacher would take on an authoritarian role with the learner having to adhere to the rules set.

In an ideal situation the teacher would be able to invoke the rules when the group did not behave in a way that was appropriate to outcomes expected by the teacher. Unfortunately this authoritarian approach could also result in the learner becoming disengaged and de motivated presenting the threat of the learner becoming disruptive especially as they have not had the opportunity to discuss their feelings on how they would like to have their learning environment managed.

This presents the teacher with the task of having enforce a set a rules which the disruptive learner has no ownership or commitment to and consequently places the teacher in a difficult position of having to find alternative

strategies to enforce boundaries which the individual feels is acceptable. The learner led method offers the students theresponsibilityto form their own rules and provides a forum for the learners to discuss and share their learning needs with their peers resulting in the rules being drawn based on the consensus of the group/class.

The advantages of this make it easier for the teacher to enforce the rules if learners fall off track by gently revisiting the rules as and when needed without appearing a disciplinarian allowing the teacher to develop a good relationship with the learners. The learners would have no choice but to adhere to the rules as they would be bound by their own principles. This method does fail to acknowledge the teachers experience in understanding the dynamics of groups and how the teacher could provide a valuable contribution to ground rules which consider the needs of individual learners.

This method may also inhibit the teacher from delivering an effective lesson as consideration may not have been applied as to whether the rules are suitable for the teaching environment. For instance taking into account the actual content of the lesson to be delivered and forgetting to include the health and safety of the learners. In establishing an effective set of ground rules for my learners, I would consider a method that offers the teacher the opportunity to create a learning environment that is safe, efficient and stimulating for the learner (Armitage, A, et al, Teaching & Training in Post CompulsoryEducation, OU, 2007).

This would be implemented through getting the learners to negotiate their own ground rules with assistance from myself. I would take charge of

facilitating the discussion to ensure all learners had an opportunity to contribute, and to ensure the inclusion of crucial rules which allow me to effectively deliver my session were also included. This would also incorporate aspects of health and safety. I would promote and encourage the learner to identify rules that wouldrespectand value their own needs and that of their group allowing the learners to display respect for themselves, one another and the teacher.

I anticipate that by adopting this approach this will provide learners with an opportunity to express their own willingness reasons for wanting to learn, resulting in increased levels ofmotivationand commitment to the sessions. For the learners this method would promote ownership of the rules, as they would have to adhere to their own set of principles as opposed to principles set by me, therefore allowing me the opportunity to better manage any behavioural concerns in the event that learners steered away from the agreed rules set.