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# A role for imagery in mentoring

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## Keywords

Mentors, Development, Learning

## Abstract

This article suggests that simple imagery and visualization techniques can be used with the mentoring relationship. After identifying the challenge that mentors need strategies to promote mentee development, the article presents a case for using visualization and shows how this strategy has been used in other contexts. Visualization and imagery is then applied to pre-service teachers. The article concludes by exploring the potential for the use of visualization by mentors arguing that visualisation could help bring about self-actualization.

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## Context

This article draws on the concept of possible selves, (Ruvolo and Markus, 1992) and suggests that simple imagery/visualization techniques can be usefully employed within the mentoring relationship between teacher educators and novice teachers. Using imagery seems to sensitize some novice teachers to the potential of classroom teaching, and appears to enhance their ability, for example, to assess pupils' progress and to stimulate their imagination and thereby maximise their potential as learners. With the burgeoning increase in school-based teacher training in England, higher education staff and mentors are sometimes unaware of effective strategies to promote their mentees' professional development. Imagery is just such a strategy.

The presentation of this article follows an action research cycle (McNiff, 1994) and this is intended to exemplify the process by which mentors can seek to improve their work with mentees. First, I identify the challenge, namely that mentors need effective strategies to promote their mentees' development. Second, I put forward a possible strategy – I draw from my own experience and from others' looking for a way to resolve the challenge – and alight on the possibility of using visualization. I investigate how this strategy has been used successfully in other contexts – medicine and sport and then reflect on how it has benefitted me before applying it to the current problematical area. I use the strategy with my novice teachers – whose professional development I need to further and then evaluate the strategy both in terms of gaining feedback from my novices and by keeping a reflective log. Given the success of the strategy in one context, I see if it has other applications in the field of mentoring – and I invite reflection before

suggesting future enquiry. I offer visualization as a possible way to lead mentees to an understanding of the choices and complexities within their new role – enabling them to draw from previous experiences as their identities metamorphose in a shifting context.

It is not so much that teachers and researchers, professionals on the landscape, need new identities, new stories to live by: they need shifting, changing identities: shifting changing stories to live by as the parade offers up new possibilities and cancels out others. For we researchers and teacher educators, our place is not, therefore to educate for a fixed landscape and for a fixed identity but rather to educate for shifting stories (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999, p. 131).

First let us consider how to visualize. There are many similar techniques – I favour this one.

The following will help you learn a simple visualization technique. It is based on the work of Simonton *et al.* (1986).

Instructions for preparing oneself for, undertaking and exiting from visualization

- 1 Go to a quiet room with soft lighting. Shut the door, sit in a comfortable chair, feet flat on the floor, eyes closed.
- 2 Become aware of your breathing.
- 3 Take in a few deep breaths, and as you let out each breath, mentally say the word, "relax."
- 4 Concentrate on your face and feel any tension in the muscles of your face and around your eyes. Make a mental picture of this tension—it might be a rope tied in a knot or a clenched fist—and then mentally picture it relaxing and becoming comfortable, like a limp rubber band.
- 5 Experience the muscles of your face and eyes becoming relaxed. As they relax, feel a wave of relaxation spreading through your body.



- 6 Tense the muscles of your face and around your eyes, squeezing tightly, then relax them and feel the relaxation spreading through your body.
- 7 More slowly down your body – jaw, neck, shoulders, back, upper and lower arms, hands, chest, abdomen, thighs, calves, ankles, feet – until every part of your body is more relaxed. For each part of the body, mentally picture the tension, then picture the tension melting away, allowing relaxation.
- 8 *Now picture yourself in pleasant, natural surrounding; wherever feels comfortable for you. Mentally fill in the details of colour, sound, texture.*
- 9 Give yourself a mental pat on the back for participating in your recovery. See yourself doing this mental imagery exercise three times a day, staying awake and alert as you do.
- 10 Then let the muscles in your eyelids lighten up, become ready to open your eyes, and become aware of the room.
- 11 Now let your eyes open, and you are ready to resume your usual activities.

*You deserve to feel good about yourself!*

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### **Learning relaxation techniques**

According to Hewitt (1978) peace and quiet are needed for beneficial meditation. Simonton *et al.* (1986) appear to concur and suggest that instructions for the relaxation-mental imagery process might usefully be tape-recorded or read by a friend. A common problem during mental imagery is the tendency for a person's mind to wander. This often represents a lack of concentration, which can be aggravated by certain medications, by pain, or fear. From time to time it is a problem that affects everyone using the process regularly. One of the most effective ways for dealing with distraction is to stop the process and ask "Why is my mind wandering?" then pursue that line of thought for a short time, perhaps five minutes. Then focus back on the exercise and go through it with whatever success one can attain.

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### **Using relaxation techniques to access one's self-system**

The challenge that faces an individual is to conjure up a choice of possible selves and actions. This requires some awareness of the potential of selves within the self-system at any one time. In recent years popular literature has promoted the idea of self-improvement by encouraging the reader to

become aware of their self-system so they can make informed choices before acting. In Houston (1982) for example the reader is exhorted to

evoke a Master Teacher (who) will represent a symbolic representation of the knowledge or artistry of the skill you want to perfect (Houston, 1982, p. 177).

Similarly in Simonton *et al.* (1986, p. 198) The Inner Guide is a process we teach patients for tapping ... rich inner resources of healing and strength. For many people the Inner Guide takes the form of a respected authority figure – a wise old man or woman, a doctor, a religious figure – with whom the patient is able to carry on an internal conversation, asking questions and hearing answers that seem to wise beyond the individual's conscious capacities.

A plethora of books teach visualization techniques (including those by Gawain, 1982; Markham, 1989; Wills, 1994) as well as cassettes and self-access training courses. It would seem from these that the self-system, which preserves the individual's well-being and should inform action, can become distanced from the conscious mind. By concentrating on "internal messages" from the self-system, an individual can see alternatives to present courses of action.

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### **Formulating possible selves as a way of focusing energy on goal achievement**

Leondari *et al.*'s (1998) paper sparked off a train of thought in my own mind that led me back to a time when I recovered from physical disablement in the 1980s. I learnt techniques that enabled me to construct in my imagination, and later realise, a future self largely freed of the restriction of pain. They enabled me to prime myself to return to a more mobile and largely pain-free lifestyle. Leondari *et al.*'s paper reminded me of techniques I used and still use to frame possible, positive self-scenarios. Cognitive theorists have suggested that individuals can "direct their attainments by setting challenging goals for themselves". Crucially, the construction of possible selves might enable realisation of attainment in teacher education. Leondari *et al.* (1998) define possible selves as:

conceptions of the self in future states. They are thought to derive from representations of the self in the past and to include representations of the self in the future. They are considered different and separable from the current or now selves but intimately connected to them.

Similarly, Markus and Ruvolo (1989, p. 212) suggest that "Most goals occasion the construction of a 'possible self' in which one is different from the now self and in which one realizes the goal". These possible selves are "future orientated components of the self-system (which) represent individuals ideas of what they might become". Others (Bandura, 1988) appear to concur with Markus' opinion that "imagining one's actions through the construction of elaborated possible selves achieving the desired goal may thus directly facilitate the translation of goals into intentions and instrumental actions". Possible selves can, or so it seems, be consciously conjured up in the pursuit of desired goals which can be positively or negatively constituted. The implications of this for initial teacher education for mentors and mentees are far-reaching.

Possible selves are thought to influence the motivation process in two ways: on the one hand by providing a clear goal to strive for – if they are positive – and to avoid if they are negative; on the other hand, by energizing an individual to pursue the actions necessary for attaining a possible self (Markus and Ruvolo, 1989). Therefore, Leondari *et al.* claim, possible selves can have a very concrete impact on how one initiates and structures actions to realize positive possible selves or to prevent negative possible selves from such realisation. In short, can they shape behaviour?

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### **Discussion; using visualization techniques in medicine and in sport**

Visualization, according to Simonton *et al.* (1986) is a process whereby the unconscious mind is able to communicate with the conscious. In Western society we are taught to value external events and objects rather than our internal environment. Meditation is an accepted part of Eastern culture but is still frequently viewed with suspicion in the West. Thus we tend to ignore feelings, dreams and intuitions from our internal self-system which can provide us with resources to meet demands of the external world.

Visualizing is "a symbolic representation of aspects of the personality not normally available during conscious awareness" (Simonton *et al.*, 1986, p. 198). The unconscious self, so Simonton *et al.* believe, can be accessed in a kind of "guided daydream" where there can be a dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious self. Learning to access this unconscious self can take time and patience and contact is easiest through consciously induced

relaxation. Thus for patients to access their inner selves they are first taught simple relaxation techniques to alleviate the stress that effectively blocks communication.

Vealey in Williams (1997) states that: Imagery is a mental technique that "programs" the human mind to respond as programmed. All athletes possess the ability to use imagery to improve their performance. Imagery is not magic. Evidence supports the effectiveness of imagery in improving sport performance, but like physical skill the psychological skill of imagery requires systematic practice to be effective.

For my pre-service teachers to use imagery effectively then, I would need to teach it near the beginning of their course and provide opportunities for them to practise using it, as one would any other acquired skill, on a regular basis.

First, imagery can and should involve all the senses. Although imagery is often termed visualization or "seeing with the mind's eye", sight is not the only significant sense. In sport, the visual, auditory, olfactory, taste, tactile and kinesthetic senses are all important. Using all appropriate senses may help the athlete create more vivid images. The more vivid the image, the more effective it is.

I began considering visualization as a possible technique for enhancing the development of novice teachers' skills, drawing from my own experience of "seeing" pain diminish. What I had overlooked was the necessary input of my other sense in recalling this event. I actually felt the pain subside – it was a tactile experience as well as a visual one. If I could encourage my novice teachers to undergo a recreation or a creation of a particular event it would doubtless be more vivid if they could "image" with as many sensory perceptions as possible – and being more vivid because it draws from more than one sensory input would probably be more effective. This again is an area where considerable research clearly needs to be carried out in future.

Until I considered the use of imagery in sport I had not come across "Symbolic learning theory" which was first proposed by Sackett (1934) who stated that imagery enabled performers to rehearse the sequence of movements as symbolic components of a task. Are there aspects of teaching which can best be consigned to automatic response? Far from encouraging a lack of attention, such automation might de-stress and empower a developing teacher in class. I thought back to aspects of teaching which could be usefully "automated" by repetition – using a tape recorder, using an overhead projector,

operating a computer – marking a set piece of work?

Certainly imagery appears to be well-accepted tool for enhancing performance in sport. According to Veaney (in Williams, 1997) it has been extensively researched: Richardson (1967a, b) and Corbin (1972) conducted extensive reviews of studies that evaluated the effects of imagery training on motor performance. Although these reviews were qualified with certain conditions, the researchers concluded that imagery is valuable in learning and performing sport skills. As a follow-up, Martens (1982) reviewed the imagery research related to sport and motor behavior from 1970 to 1982. He concluded that imagery is an effective technique to improve performance and documented improvement in sport skills.

Cox, in *Sport Psychology Concepts and Applications*, 3rd ed., sets out a summary of three Cognitive Intervention Programs that utilize imagery and relaxation (see Table I).

If imagery enhances performance in sports, where are the parallels in classroom teaching? Where if anywhere might we enable new teachers to “run on automatic pilot” so that they can concentrate their attention on those aspects of teaching that require conscious and close attention?

**Autobiography; what has led me to believe in visualization**

The process of establishing of an awareness of my own self-system took time and effort and I sometimes grew skeptical about the viability of doing so. Greenwald (1983, p. 231) sets out several reasons for the difficulty sometimes encountered in accessing mental content:

- 1 the mental content is repressed, or dissociated because it is morally unacceptable to the individual;

- 2 the mental content cannot be assimilated into the conscious system because it contains material incongruous with that system; and
- 3 the mental content consists of pre-verbal or non-verbal material that is not encoded in language.

In my own case there was a combination of all three elements and I found some difficulty initially in transferring information from my preconscious self to my conscious self. It took a concerted effort to bring about conscious awareness, perhaps because, as Greenwald (1983, p. 235) says:

The hallmark of preconscious material is that it can be brought to conscious awareness by an act of attention. This does not necessarily mean that it is a simple matter to become aware of preconscious processes. Reactions at this level are so often automatic and fleeting that it may take special practice and training in the direction of attention to become aware of certain preconscious thoughts and images.

The process of undertaking techniques of visualization and heightened self-awareness has parallels with action research and with stages set out in Little’s concept (1983) of personal projects, beginning with awareness, then identification, pre-evaluation and acceptance. I became aware of the effects of my pain, of the nature and severity of the pain itself, planned how I would like to manage it, undertook pain management and evaluated any progress I had made. In the brief autobiographical account below I describe my own mastery of chronic pain.

Looking back and re-experiencing the exquisite moment of my self-healing I have a vivid memory of an incongruence between the self I was at that time and the desired self I wished to become. In a passion of focus, in a surge of sensation, I found myself able to centre my energies in a way I had never experienced. A therapist at a local Pain Clinic instructed me to:

**Table I**

Summary of three cognitive intervention programs utilizing imagery and relaxation

Intervention program	Characteristic steps
Visuo-motor behaviours rehearsal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Relaxation training for mastery</li> <li>2 Imagery in sports related environment</li> <li>3 Specific application of imagery and relaxation</li> </ol>
Stress inoculation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Identification of stress and fear</li> <li>2 Relaxation training</li> <li>3 Athlete learns coping skills</li> <li>4 Progressive stress inoculation using coping skills</li> </ol>
Stress management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Conceptualization of stress</li> <li>2 Development of a psychological skill for coping with stress</li> <li>3 Practise coping skills in real and imagined stressful environment</li> </ol>

Imagine your ... acknowledge but don't live your pain - feel its breadth and look at its colour. Visualize and believe (yes, that was the key) visualize yourself without the pain.

Eventually there came one clearly recallable moment when I altered my perception of the pain:

*The moment I knew I was healing myself was one of the funniest I shall ever remember! Encased in plaster from just below my armpits to my knee there was "I" seeing myself running, dancing and playing with friends on a beach! Momentary projection.. Pain, searing pain, came machete-ing through my visualization - don't panic, hold, hold to the certainty that you will not falter in experiencing health. Draw from your being this agony and gently, gently ease it into vision. Initially so all pervasive this pain becomes a ball. Initially so immobile it begins to move - it becomes a BALL! It bounces - I can play - and there I am - a child with a ball - a ball of pain. What to do with this ball? Easy! I colour the ball, add stripes, fair-isle patterns like knitwear! This ball of pain - this pain ball no longer daunts me! I have a choice - an ultimate choice to let it return to all embracing agony - or to retain the ball. I bounce this ridiculous sphere round the walls of my imagination - it loses its horror and I am reborn as it were as a new "self", a self that knows that health is closer.*

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### **How visualization is used effectively with pre-service teachers**

The pre-service teachers who took part in using imagery were coming to the end of a 36 week course leading to the award of a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). They were in the process of becoming modern foreign languages teachers and had already spent three extended periods of teaching experience in two different schools. There were 12 students in the group and this was the first occasion they had worked together as a whole group for several months. Some of the sessions in which we explored the possibilities of using guided imagery were recorded on video-tape and reflections on what occurred during the visualization are detailed later in this paper. At the end of the sessions, the pre-service teachers talked about their reactions to using imagery and after this discussion wrote individual evaluations.

I explained to the group, prior to the session detailed below, that imagery does not necessarily mean something seen in the mind's eye. It might be a sound or a taste, a

feeling - and image emanating from any sensory stimulus.

The sessions were video-taped and I used this to supplement my understanding of the impact of what occurred on the novice teachers and to examine my own practice as a teacher educator.

Part of the experience of my using visualization in my work as a teacher educator involved bringing to my group a large format photograph taken by my father in the 1960s, I would guess of a little girl sitting attentively, alone and erect at her wooden desk in a classroom. The lines of her head and her sculptured hair echoed in the distant focus on the handles of her pram. Light falls on her work laid out in front of her, framed by her arms. The light reflects on her face - serene and yet purposeful. She is perhaps six or seven years old - and her dress tells us it is summer. It is a maths lesson and tapes for measuring lie stretched out in front of her.

I began the session by explaining the origin of the photo to my group. They can see it is large but I leave it face down in front of me. Having shared the visual stimulus of the music, the group is primed to be creative - and later I explain the importance of priming, of preparing a class in a similar way. Pre-teach, stimulate, create, recall, reflect, recount - this is the pattern of initial teacher education I am devising as I explore the potential of visualization in teaching.

I give my instructions to the group. I want them to think about their own reactions to the photograph - how do they *feel*, what do they want to *do* when they see it, *how* can they respond to what they see? I determine to seek the personal reaction to the photograph before it becomes just another resource in the armoury for planning a lesson in school. This is my value as a teacher-educator - that the teacher must experience *as* a learner in planning a lesson. So often I observe lessons where the teaching is almost detached from the learning - it is a solo performance, instead of what it must be - a means of promoting optimum learning.

I sense the tension mount, there is a gasp from the group as I reveal the photo - the creative pause? An almost tangible calm descends and the nascent teachers enter into what seems to me to be a visual dialogue with the photograph. I look round the room - there are gentle smiles - this image is special to me and I feel they know this and share an empathy in wonder at it. The group concentrates, the air is still, as they write. The minutes pass and slowly the members of the group ease back from their writing and wait for others still committing thoughts to

paper – to complete their notes. C, starts to speak – almost in whisper – “Comment t’appelles-tu?” (What is your name?) I think she’s imaging! I believe she is holding an image of this girl alive in front of her and is talking to her. Totally oblivious of the group, it seems, she is speaking to the girl in the photo – What is your name, What are you doing? Do you like what you’re doing? I hadn’t expected this response – the others in the group sit, enrapt as she questions, sits back and eases out of her visual encounter. I would question her – I need to talk to her, I need to know. I hadn’t expected the reaction from the group. They sit stunned but respecting her response. In this one moment I feel my intuition about her creativity is confirmed – she *is* different, very different from others in the group – and something seems to stun them – is it her creativity? So often they have appeared to discount her, to reject her almost and now they are listening as if spellbound.

It is so exciting as a teacher-educator to perceive another’s way of seeing and making sense of the world, so differently from the way I do. I would never have questioned the girl – but for C this is clearly a very special moment. So special she is moved close to tears. This is *her* self-actualization, this her moment of identity within the group – she has never commanded such attention and such recognition of her own contribution to community as now. There is evident pleasure on the faces of the others in the group – it is as if C has opened the door – she has dared to be herself and opened the door – given permission it feels for others to do likewise – the ideas flow – we play creatively with ideas, suspending judgment, pooling sharing impressions and plans – If I were doing this I would ask my class to write to the girl . . . if it were me I would be her teacher and I’d say . . . no. The kids could pretend to be her teacher – they’d love that! They could imagine they are her friend – what’s she really like?

Later I encouraged the group to think themselves into a classroom situation where they were teaching but things did not go quite as they had hoped and planned. In their visualization I encouraged them to pick up on how the class and they were reacting – perhaps the children were not paying attention, maybe someone walked in and disrupted the flow of the lesson. I asked them to focus on their own face and body language – to step outside themselves and audit the effect of the situation upon them. There were giggles of amusement and nervousness from the group! I invited them to change the situation just marginally by changing their facial expression to a smile – and I watched

as some of the members of my group duly began to relax their facial muscles and gently settle into their chairs. I asked them to see what was happening in front of them and to subtly replay the situation so things went a little better than they first remembered – what might they change? My message was that they could put some of the negative feelings on one side and increase their feeling of well-being through using visualization. Then I asked the group to tell me how they might make a slight change that would make the lesson “better”.

K said she would just change her face. As she did that during visualization, everything felt good since she felt less “frustrated and worked up”. J commented that she had tried that – in class – and it *hadn’t* felt better. Clearly I had a challenge here and visualization was on the line! I suggested that visualization during reflection on rather than in action might be useful. Simply put, I was suggesting that by using visualization the teacher might achieve a sense of completion, of satisfaction despite a difficult experience in class. Cl picked this up and said this was exactly what she did – it was not *fair* to pupils to carry on the difficulties from one lesson into the next. Then she told how she had “changed round” a troublesome year 10 class. She went in good humoured and shifted her expectations away from insisting on full silence to allowing some (purposeful) talk among the pupils. “I think I was the only teacher in the school who enjoyed year 10!” she told us, obviously proud of her achievement. M stressed how she had found that changing her facial expression had made her more approachable for pupils – and added that it takes time to build a more positive relationship with a class – more than one lesson.

### **Using imagery to enhance pre-service teacher development: preparing for a job interview**

The next scenario using visualization with my PGCE group involved remembering, or conjuring up, an interview situation where tricky questions were being asked and you, the interviewee were feeling a little ill at ease. I suggested that the novices listen to the awkward question being asked and looked loosely at the interviewer’s face. By this I was hoping to desensitize them. By looking directly at the interviewer they might be able to manage the nervousness at a later stage in a real interview that had prevented them giving their best. As they looked at the interviewer’s face, I asked them to monitor how they were reacting. Next, I invited them to imagine themselves giving the answer that

they wanted to and again to monitor their own reactions. How did they feel? (and not only how did they look). While holding this image in their mind, I quietly suggested that they work on their own self-image. They were at the interview because they had prepared and they wanted this job, they were "good" enough. Finally I told them that the interviewer would ask one last vital question – the question I tend to use at all pre-PGCE interviews; "Now tell me, why should I offer you this post?" Again I asked them to give the answer they wanted to and to sense that things were going well and that they would be successful – how would they be sitting and looking – positive reinforcement here!

J took up this cue and told the group how she had replayed a past interview in just this way. It had become a learning experience, rather than staying a painful memory, as she prepared herself for the next interview by mentally rehearsing the question that had proved problematic to answer. In doing this exercise I was showing the group that visualization might enable them to prepare for what is inevitable – a very stressful experience. K said that she too had managed to effect a positive replay and that, in her case, this had happened while the interview was still underway. At the end, the interviewer had invited her to say how she would change any aspect of her performance that she had just given – she said she would have changed her response to a certain question, rephrased it, and got the job on offer. I hope more interviewers take heed.

*After the session I made the following observations in my log*

*Something very special has occurred in our morning's session. The relationship I have shared with members of the group for almost a year has changed – we are relating in a much more personal and individual way – a barrier has gone down and there are bridge between us now. They ask me personal questions – am I the girl, how do I use imagery in my everyday life – what is it like to use it for controlling pain? What are my photographs like? Like my father's? Something has happened, there is more understanding – more communication – more intimacy.*

*I realize I am not only giving more of myself – personalizing my relationship as a teacher educator – much as personalized my teaching with my pupils – but I am learning so much from the group. C tells me about her own use of visualization. C explains that she does not have keepsakes – for her the past is gone, defunct – and does not visibly connect with the present and the future. For K it is different – her box of keepsakes keeps her in touch with*

*her past – for S it is important to keep momentos of everything – and thereby "hold" the past in the present. K is marrying soon. How will she capture her marriage so she can re-enter the experience later, if and when she wishes – she will choose just one or two special images and remember every detail. I realize how vital imagery is to the patterning of our daily life.*

### **Exploring the potential for the use of visualization by mentors**

#### **Possible areas to consider**

- Reinforcing positive self-images in the mentee's new role.
- Sensitisation of the mentee to new experiences in new role.
- Sharing a mentor's experiences – making the tacit more explicit.
- Forming positive possible selves for the mentee to work towards.

#### **Possible selves applied to an education context**

The concept of possible selves has been already been applied to an educational context (Inglehart *et al.*, 1989). In Ingelhart *et al.*'s (1989) and in Leondari *et al.*'s (1998) work, mentioned earlier, the effects of possible selves have been measured against academic achievement:

Thinking about possible selves can have a very concrete impact on how we initiate and structure our actions to realize positive possible selves. Concerning the structuring aspect, we argue that the more a person focuses on a possible professional self, the better the future academic achievement connected with this profession will be (Inglehart *et al.*, 1989, p. 471).

The findings suggest that possible selves play an important part in the motivation process in terms of structuring future actions as well as energizing the individual to achieve desired goals.

It seems to me that pre-service teachers might come, through a process of visualization, to value those selves that have already attained actualization within their own self-system. Under pressure in a new and challenging work environment, reminding themselves of former success in another context can protect and enhance their threatened self-esteem. Similarly, they can accommodate those successes into possible selves that are as yet embryonic and these past successful selves can assist them in attaining their desired goal of becoming a good teacher. By raising awareness of messages emitted by their self-system, trainees could learn to select courses of

action that would be appropriate for them to pursue and to reject or put on hold those selves that are less likely to enable them to structure their actions to achieve their desired goal. According to Kaplan (1986, p.102), self-awareness once mastered becomes an integral part of the individual:

Once the person experiences self-feelings, they become part of the system of personal traits, behaviours and experiences that stimulate self-referent responses.

Mentees can learn, I suggest, to appreciate that skills are transferable between selves. I suggest that accessing and formulating possible selves can provide an energizing force and a structuring for mentors by reviewing messages generated by their own internal self-system they too are likely to be in a stronger position to prioritize appropriately. Through accessing their self-system they, like Simontons' patients, can achieve more positive goals than those they have managed before.

### Conclusion

By building into the programme of initial teacher education the technique of visualization, the process of pre-service teaching exploits humans' natural ability to go beyond their fear and experience success in rehearsing their teaching strategies. This is an essential process of natural preparation for action that the human self-system has evolved to cope with change and especially under threat. Little (1983) claimed, within his theory of Personal Projects, that through visualization the self-system can prime muscles and nerves ready for action:

A personal project will be regarded as a set of inter-related acts over time, which is intended to maintain or attain a state of affairs foreseen by the individual. Personal projects reflect cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects of human conduct (Little, 1983, p. 276).

Effective training incorporates this pre-experience and visualization can contribute to enhancing this process. Correspondingly, the professional development of mentors that results from working with pre-service teachers could make effective use of visualization techniques. Visualization might enable mentors to prepare for assisting their mentees in the training process and enable them to reflect upon and improve their own teaching too. They could visualize themselves in the trainees' place in threatening situations and then share a discussion more easily about the dynamics and desirable goals within a class situation.

Having spent a considerable amount of effort honing their skills so they become almost instinctive, teachers are not always well prepared to unpick the reasons for their actions. Visualization could enable them to project themselves into teaching situations and share their insights from past experience that have resulted in present choices being made and current actions undertaken. Visualization could empower mentors in educating pre-service teachers, particularly where they have problems, by visualizing their teacher self in the role of the novice. Thus, visualization techniques could bring about self-actualization for mentors (Fletcher, 1998) as well as for pre-service teachers.

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