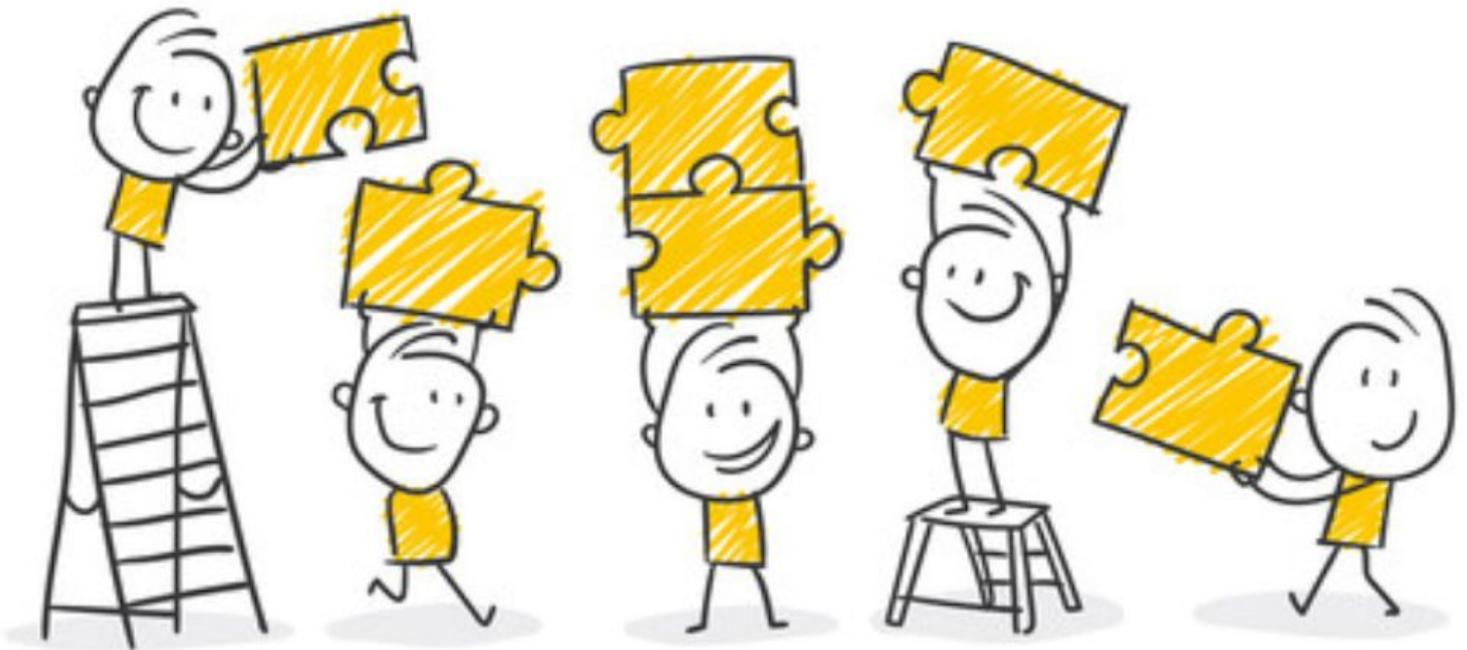


Build Your Own Lesson

A fun and educational project for you and your class to explore together.



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Contents

Introduction	page 2
1. The BYOL Concept	pages 3-5
2. Team Roles	pages 6-11
- 2.2 The Leader	page 7
- 2.3 The Right Hand	page 8
- 2.4 The Quality Control	page 9
- 2.5 The Peacekeeper	page 10
- 2.6 Overview on Belbin Team Roles	page 11
3. The Role of the Teacher	pages 12-15
4. Notes	pages 16-19

Introduction

The Build Your Own Lesson project, or 'BYOL' as we will refer to it from now on, is designed to help students to connect better to their class on an emotional level. Between the ages of ten and fourteen, it is common among pupils to feel 'left out' or 'out of place'. This may in turn cause an aversion to school and classroom activities. Focusing on their education then becomes challenging, leading to underachievement by their own potential. We believe that this problem may be softened by implementation of the BYOL project.

The BYOL explores the idea of allowing students to present something that they themselves are interested in to their peers. This may be something they have taken a liking to recently or have been intrigued by for a longer time. It may be something cultural, something they find funny or something they practice as a hobby. As long as it is something they feel passionate about. They may then have their own moment of sharing this with the class in the form of a self-build lesson. How exactly this will take form, we will discuss in the chapter 'The BYOL concept' on pages 3-5.

Of course, they will not have to do this all on their own. The BYOL project suggests a team of four students to create a lesson. In this team, there are four distinct roles that a student may have. Throughout the year, all students will have practiced with each of the roles at least once. We will elaborate on this in the chapter 'Team roles' on pages 6-11.

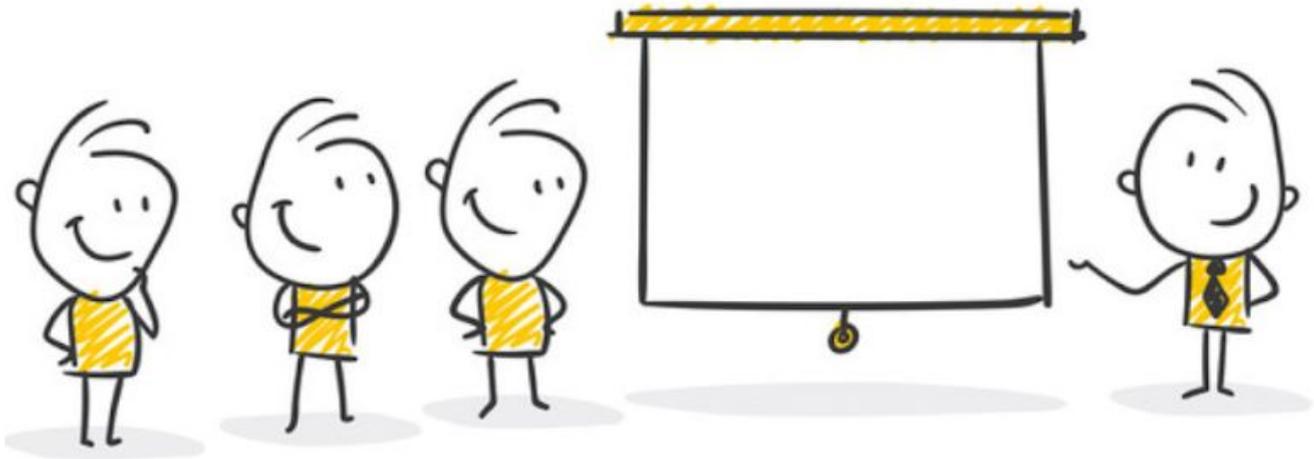
So what would be your role as a teacher in this? This may be a surprise to some of you, but we do not ask the teachers to have a very active role within this project once it has begun. We believe it is best to allow the students to figure out most things by themselves. The teacher, though present, must remain in the background for most of the time. Only at the beginning will they take a more active role in order to explain the concept of the BYOL project to the class. From that moment on, they will only have the role of 'mediator' or 'assistant' if required. Elaboration on the teacher's role will follow in the chapter 'The role of the teacher' on pages 12-15.

The main goal of the BYOL project is to allow students to learn more about each other and to gain a better understanding towards their peers, which leads to a stronger emotional connection and less feelings of exclusion. Along with that, they will also practice working in a team setting and this may provide them with more insight into their own strengths and weaknesses.

We hope that, with the implementation of the BYOL project, the students will feel more emotionally connected to their class with a stronger educational outcome as a result.

The BYOL Concept

In this chapter we will discuss the concept of the BYOL project and how this may take form in practice.



1.1 In General

The main idea of the BYOL concept is to allow each student to present something of their own interest to the class during a self-constructed lesson. The subject that they decide to make the central focus of the lesson may be decided fully by themselves. However, we do advise the teacher to check the suitability of the chosen topic beforehand, as the chosen subjects should not be discriminatory, derogatory or hurtful in any way to other classmates.

Once the student has selected their subject and you as a teacher have approved it, the real project can begin. The student will be assisted in creating their lesson plan by three other, randomly assigned classmates who will all have a different role to fulfill within the newly formed team. We will elaborate on these roles in the chapter 'Team Roles' later on.

1.2 A Lesson Plan May Be as Follows

The student will take on the role of teacher for about 30-45 minutes (this duration is an approximation, it may vary based on time availability, there should be some time left at the end for evaluation). The lesson may be in any form that the student deems appropriate for the topic chosen. However, a safe environment must always be maintained.

The student may for example decide to make a presentation, video, audio or song, mind map etc. to present their topic. Perhaps they would like to take the class outside for a demonstration or bring in some supplies in order to do a workshop. Maybe they would even like to invite a guest speaker, such as a parent or a friend who is connected to the topic.

This, given that it can be arranged within the provided time-frame, can all be part of the self-built lesson. We would advise the students to write down a minute-to-minute plan for their lesson, as to not lose the overview and to keep track of what they are doing.

1.3 Time Frame

We believe that all students must have a chance to build their own lesson at least once during the year. In order to facilitate this, the teacher will have to do some planning at the start of the year.

In the Netherlands, there are 41 weeks in the school year. During week one, the teacher will explain the concept of the BYOL project to the class. So then there will be 40 weeks left to ensure that everyone has a turn.

We advise a two-week preparation time for a team of students to create a lesson-plan. This is mostly in order to give them enough time to come up with a concept, plan of action and to possibly arrange the presence of supplies or a guest speaker. Therefore our proposition is to have one presentation per week, with a two-week preparation time for each group.

This means that each week, a new team will be assigned for the 'slot' two weeks from then. At that very same moment, another team will be right in the middle of their preparation time (as they have been grouped the week prior) and have their lesson 'slot' one week from then.

In practice, the first presentation will be three weeks after the start of the school year and two weeks from the first explanation you as a teacher have given about the BYOL project during week one of the school year.

1.4 For clarity see this schedule:

k YY_ 'cbY'	k YY_ 'hk c'	k YY_ 'h fYY'	k YY_ 'Zi f'	k YY_ 'Zj Y'
- Explain BYOL concept to class - Assign group A	- Preparation group A - Assign group B	- Lesson group A - Preparation group B - Assign group C	- Lesson group B - Preparation group C - Assign group D	- Lesson group C - Preparation group D - Assign group E

1.5 Evaluation

Upon completion of the self-built lesson, there will be time for evaluation and feedback. This will consist of three distinct parts: feedback on the lesson, teammate to teammate feedback and self-reflection. Further explanation will follow now.

Feedback on the lesson will be done by the rest of the class and you, the teacher. This will contain constructive feedback only on the final execution of the self-built lesson. How did the class experience it? Did they find it useful, educational, fun? This part of the evaluation is meant to be done with the entire class. How the role of you as their teacher fits in to this moment will be explained in the chapter 'The Role of the Teacher'.

Teammate-to-teammate feedback might be slightly more challenging for some students as they will be asked to be upfront with their thoughts regarding their teammate's performances. It is therefore important that this part of the evaluation is not done in front of the whole class. It would rather be done within the team, together with the teacher. It is advised to have this moment of evaluation directly after the class feedback on the lesson. Waiting for too long may lead to students not quite remembering exactly how other teammates functioned, which will lead to poorer quality of feedback.

Self-reflection is something that is not meant to be influenced by anyone other than the student themselves. However, the teacher may help them formulate their thoughts (see the sub-heading 'Leader of Evaluation' in the chapter 'The Role of the Teacher'). The point of the self-reflection is for the student to learn more about themselves, how they function within a team and how they coped with the different roles they had.

2. Team roles

In this chapter we will focus on the four different roles within a team of students responsible for a self-build lesson plan.



2.1 In General

As previously stated, a team will consist of four students, each with specific responsibilities and tasks assigned to them. Our inspiration for these four team roles stems from the well-known 'Nine team roles of Belbin', based on research by dr. Meredith Belbin in the 1980s. He discovered that there are nine distinct types of people within a team. This research gave us a revolutionary insight in the inner workings of teams. The main conclusion was that teams work together best when there is a diversity of personality types represented.

So why not make teams of nine and have each role be represented? Though this may seem like the superior solution, one must also take into account that larger groups are much more difficult to manage when compared to smaller groups. Therefore, we decided on a group of four where each role will represent one or multiple of the personality types described by dr. Belbin. It is important to note that two of Belbin's team role types are not represented in the BYOL project. These are the 'Plant' and the 'Specialist'. We felt as if these roles simply were not possible to integrate into the BYOL project and did not add anything to the existing concept. An overview of all Belbin team roles will be included at the end of this chapter.

On the following pages you will find further information regarding the specifics of each team role in the BYOL project. When assigning team roles, make sure that the students review these specifics and gain a better understanding of what is expected of them.

2.2 The Leader

The leader is the student who will come up with the topic for the self-built lesson. They will get the opportunity to present to the class something that they are interested in, good at or would like to know more about. In the chapter 'The BYOL Concept' you could already find additional information on this self-built lesson and possible topic selections.

The leader's role is based on the Belbin team roles of 'Coordinator' and 'Shaper'. These roles respectively represent a confident and challenging presence within the team.

A 'Coordinator' is someone who is more dominant, self-disciplined and stable, a generally good chairperson, who is able to clarify goals for the other team members.

A 'Shaper' is someone who is similar to the 'coordinator' in some ways, but generally more abrasive and outgoing. He or she is not afraid to speak their mind and take control over what is theirs. Together, these Belbin roles make up our BYOL role of 'the Leader'.

The main task of the leader is to be the face, the identity of the project. It is 'their' lesson plan that they are creating and it should reflect their vision above anyone else's. All general planning that is involved with creating the lesson plan will be their responsibility, as will be the execution of the final product, which is the lesson at its due time. Of course, many students might find this intimidating and may be unsure of where to begin. This is to be expected, after all, it is not often that students are at the head of a big project. Especially considering the fact that a little bit of creativity is required from the leader in order to start building the lesson plan.

Fortunately, the leader will not be alone. After all, what is a leader without their team? The leader will be assisted* in the BYOL project by the 'Right Hand', 'Quality Control' and 'Peacekeeper'.

*Assisted is the right word here: one must be careful that the leader treats their teammates as equals, not as lackeys. The teammates are not there to simply do the leaders bidding.

2.3 The Right Hand

The right hand is the first person the leader will go to for help. They must assist the leader in building the lesson plan by, for example, helping to create a powerpoint presentation or video, writing or acting in a play, helping to contact guest speakers and so on. With anything the leader wants to try for their lesson, the right hand should be right there at their side.

They must also help or assist during the actual lesson itself, if the leader requires this from them. It is very important for the right hand to know that they must absolutely not try to integrate their own visions and ideas into the lesson plan; that is the leader's task only.

The role of the right hand is rooted in the Belbin team roles of 'Implementer' and 'Resource Investigator'. Most important within these roles are the aspects of discipline, diplomacy and efficiency, all in order to be of better support to the team as a whole.

An 'Implementer' is someone who is methodical, sincere, systematic and stable. These characteristics are very important to the right hand. They must be trustworthy in order for the leader to be able to rely on them.

A 'Resource investigator' is someone who is extroverted, optimistic and social. Not only should the right hand be trustworthy, they should be likeable and easy to approach, especially, but not exclusively, towards the leader of the team.

For some, the role of right hand might be frustrating. Not being able to push your own ideas will be a hard for those students who normally feel more comfortable taking the lead. It is crucial that these students understand the importance of their current role as a right hand. It is this role that often determines the course of the preparatory phase of the project. Where the leader is the face of the project, the right hand is the backbone. Without them, the project would never be realisable.

2. 4 The Quality Control

The quality control will take over the role that would normally belong to the teacher in a standard classroom setting. Their main task is to make sure that the final lesson plan maintains a certain level of educational value. The BYOL project, though focused mostly on emotional connection and teamwork, should have a more general educational value as well.

The quality control will be an advisor to the leader, not only when asked, but whenever they feel like the lesson plan is losing its depth. They may help the leader get back on track by challenging their ideas and asking them to think deeply: What do they want to convey to the class? Can the leader pitch their idea? Is something missing in their preparation? Could something be added to create more perspective on the subject? Being pushy, though often seen as a negative trait, is very important to the role of quality control.

The Belbin roles that correspond with the BYOL role of quality control are 'Monitor Evaluator' and 'Completer Finisher'. Several character traits have a central position within these roles, such as being serious, worried and conscientious.

A 'Monitor Evaluator', as the name suggests, is someone who is sober and makes accurate judgements. This will be helpful in evaluating the educational worth of the lesson plan.

A 'Completer Finisher' is someone who searches for errors and is inclined to be more painstaking in their projects. This will help the quality control to spot shortcomings within the project early on.

Most challenging to the quality control is to gain an understanding of what exactly is a 'good educational value' for their project. This will be especially difficult for the first few quality controls, as they will have not yet seen many examples of self-built lessons. When doubt arises about the level of depth required, the quality control may approach the teacher for advice.

2.5 The Peacekeeper



Last but not least, we have the role of peacekeeper. The responsibility for proper communication and cooperation within the team lies with them. Their main task is to assure that all team members are on the same page and that there is no conflict between them. In order to do this, the peacekeeper must keep an eye on all other team members and check in every now and then to see how they are doing.

Is everyone on the same page? Did something go wrong in communication, leading to students being unsure of what the plan is? Is anyone upset with the choices or behaviour of another team member? How does this affect cooperation between them? These are some questions that the peacekeeper may keep in mind during the course of the project.

Unlike the previous three BYOL roles, the role of peacekeeper only has one Belbin team role linked to it, the role of 'Team Worker'.

A 'Team Worker' is someone who is likable, perceptive and supportive. Someone who is able to calm the waters in a diplomatic way when conflict arises. It goes without saying that these character traits are highly important to a successful peacekeeper role.

When all goes well within the team, the task of peacekeeper will be a relatively easy one. If however, for any reason, a conflict does arise within the group, being peacekeeper becomes more of a challenge. It is not easy to resolve communication errors or conflict. Even though the peacekeeper must try their absolute best to resolve problems themselves, sometimes this simply does not work out. In such situations, the peacekeeper may alert the teacher as to what is going on and why they feel like they cannot solve the problem on their own.

2.6 Overview on Belbin's Team Roles

	<u>Team role</u>	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Possible weaknesses</u>
	D'UbH' Dominant, imaginative, introvert, original, radical-minded, trustful and uninhibited.	Creative, unorthodox, solves difficult problems.	Too preoccupied to communicate effectively.
	7 ca d'YHf' Zjb]g\ Yf' Anxious, conscientious, introvert, self-controlled, self-disciplined, submissive and worrisome.	Painstaking, conscientious, searches out errors and omissions, delivers on time.	Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.
	æ d'Ya YbhYf' Conservative, controlled, disciplined, efficient, inflexible, methodical, sincere, stable and systematic.	Disciplined, reliable, conservative and efficient, turns ideas into practical actions.	Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.
	HYUa k cf_Yf' Extrovert, likeable, loyal, stable, submissive, supportive, unassertive, and uncompetitive.	Co-operative, mild, perceptive and diplomatic, listens, builds, averts friction, calms the waters.	Indecisive in crunch situations.
	Acb]kcf'9j Ui Urcf' Dependable, fair-minded, introvert, low drive, open to change, serious, stable and unambitious.	Sober, strategic and discerning, sees all options, judges accurately.	Lacks drive and ability to inspire others.
	7 c" fX]bUrcf' Dominant, trusting, extrovert, mature, positive, self-controlled, self-disciplined and stable.	Mature, confident, a good chairperson, clarifies goals, promotes decision making, delegates well.	Can be seen as manipulative. Offloads personal work.
	F Ygci fW'æbj Ygh] Urcf' Diplomatic, dominant, enthusiastic, extrovert, flexible, inquisitive, optimistic, persuasive, positive, relaxed, social and stable.	Extrovert, communicative, explores opportunities, develops contacts.	Over-optimistic. Loses interest after initial enthusiasm.
	G\ UdYf' Abrasive, anxious, arrogant, competitive, dominant, edgy, emotional, extrovert, impatient, impulsive, outgoing and self-confident.	Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure, has drive and courage to overcome obstacles	Prone to provocation. Offends people's feelings.
	GdYWU]gh' Expert, defendant, not interested in others, serious, self-disciplined, efficient.	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated; provides knowledge and skills in rare supply	Contributes on a narrow front only. Dwells on technicalities.

*Not included in the BYOL project

3. The Role of the Teacher

In this chapter we will go into detail about the tasks of the teacher during the BYOL project.



3.1 In General

Within the BYOL project, the teacher will have a much less prominent role as opposed to general classroom sessions, in which they are the focus of attention. The point of the BYOL project is to leave the students in charge of most of their own lesson. An intervention by the teacher should be the exception to the rule.

This does not mean, however, that the teacher is not involved in the BYOL project at all. They do in fact have a few very important roles that they must play. These are: the Information Provider, Planner, Safety-keeper, Assistant and Leader of Evaluation (IPSAL for short). The exact tasks belonging to these roles will be explained below.

3.2 Information Provider

Before the BYOL project can be implemented, the students must of course be informed about the specifics of it. This will be your job as a teacher. Sit down with your class during the first week of school and have them pay close attention to your instruction. Most important for them to know is what will be expected of them. Inform them about the time frame, the team role positions and what they imply, a general idea of what a self-built lesson may look like and so on. It is important for them to feel confident about their knowledge of the project before entering into it, in order to make it a success.

Do not worry if you are currently unsure about the specifics of the BYOL project yourself, as by the end of this booklet, you will be armed with enough knowledge to pass it on to the class.

3.3 Planner

Though the lesson plans will be planned out by the student, you, the teacher, will be in charge of arranging a proper schedule and team division in order to execute the BYOL project. An example of a schedule has been provided in chapter 'The BYOL Concept' earlier on in this booklet. This example may, of course, be altered and adjusted according to the practicality of the school system it will be implemented in.

Besides the schedule, you will also be in charge of assigning a new group every week. Now it is very important that all children will be given a turn at all of the different positions within the team at least once during the year, so these must be pre-assigned as well. What method you wish to use in order to make the teams will be up to you. You could use an app or keep track of groups using an Excel sheet, you can choose what works best for you. The project would work best if the teams are randomly created, which will allow students to work with classmates, with whom they normally would not team up.

To make sure that the teams will be shuffled at random, an application called "Team Shake" is recommended. "Team Shake" provides an intelligent algorithm to divide groups of people to always be on different teams. By creating random teams, the imbalance in team building will be eliminated. For teachers with large lists of people it is possible to import lists from email, via phone contacts, and from text or .csv-files. In addition, the app supports an export of the teams to share and save teams via email or Facebook. "Team Shake" is available in the App Store for €2.29 as well as in the Google Play Store for €0.99.

3.4 Safety-keeper

As a teacher, one of your most important duties to the class is to ensure a safe learning environment. This does not only refer to physical safety, but emotional safety as well. Though it has been previously stated that the subject of the self-constructed lesson may be chosen by the student, the teacher must be made aware of the selection once a topic has been decided on and give his or her seal of approval before the process may continue. During the process, the student also should report back to the teacher what their general plan is going to be. The teacher will then have to check to see if this plan can be executed safely. Two examples of questionable safety will follow and we will give solutions of how to deal with this.

Example one: A student would like to make their lesson all about motorcycles and ask their neighbour to come and give all of the children a ride on the back of their motorcycle.

Now what is your task? Riding on a motorcycle will always be risky, especially with children. You should discuss this with the student in question. Is it really a good idea to do this? What about safety measures such as helmets and protective clothing? Is the motorcycle in question suitable for passenger riders, children to be specific?

You might suggest that their idea is very enthusiastic and fun but may not be doable in practice. You could help by encouraging them to think about a solution. Perhaps the students could come, sit on the motorcycle and rev the engine, but not go for a ride?

Example two: A student would like to do their presentation all about the Second World War and the Holocaust, as they have recently been to a museum and are intrigued by the history.

Now what is your task? One should think carefully about this. Emotional safety is not as palpable as physical safety and therefore less easy to control. However, as a teacher it is your task to make school as emotionally safe as possible. In this case, that might mean taking the student aside and asking them how they would like to present this topic. Are they aware of the social impact that the Second World War and the Holocaust still have today? Have they thought about their classmates and their possible feelings towards these subjects? Should they perhaps be more careful about what they say?

Forbidding somewhat controversial or emotional topics is not advised, as they may be very good learning opportunities. However, it is advisable for the teacher to keep a close eye on these particular lesson plans to ensure that no potentially hurtful situations occur.

3.5 Assistant

Exactly how this role takes form will depend for the most part on the student's needs during their preparation time. Some may not need much assistance at all, if any, and others may look to you at every turn in their lesson building process.

The role of assistant will only come at play when a student has approached you for help. This will most often be the case if the leader gets stuck in their planning (difficulty using computer programs, not being able to contact a certain guest speaker, not being able to arrange supplies etc.). It might be that the peacekeeper is unable to resolve a conflict within the team, or it may be that the quality control is not sure about the educational value that is required of the lesson plan.

If such situations occur, it will be up to the judgement of the teacher to decide whether to step in and assist or not. A rule of thumb is that the teacher will not intervene unless they feel like the students would certainly not be able to move forward if they do not assist.

Another possibility could be that a student approaches you to proclaim a problem in communication between the team members. In such a case, the first thing to do would be to take the 'Peacekeeper' aside (one of the team roles, explained in the chapter 'Team Roles') and ask their opinion on this. Perhaps you can motivate them to try and resolve the communication error within the group. Only if the peacekeeper is unable to mediate things on their own should the teacher take over and address the situation.

Generally speaking, the BYOL project will be carried out by the students, and so it should be that the teacher does not interfere unless absolutely necessary.

3.6 Leader of evaluation

At the end of a self-built lesson, there will be a moment for the students to evaluate their experience. Unlike the rest of the BYOL project, this part requires the teacher to be more of an active participant. Evaluating and providing feedback is difficult, therefore we feel it is best for the teacher to mediate this moment.

Feedback from the class will have to be conducted in a (somewhat) orderly manner, so that constructive criticism may be provided. The teacher must make sure that students are not trying to shout each other and keep a sense of calm within the group. However, the students should be allowed to freely express their opinion, as this is the focus of this round of evaluation .

Teammate to teammate feedback will also be a part of the BYOL project (more on

this was found in the chapter 'The BYOL Concept'). This can be a little intense for some students, as they will be asked to speak their mind about the behaviours and efforts of their teammates. As a teacher, you will be asked to monitor this moment to ensure no unnecessarily hurtful things are said or done.

Finally, there will be time for some self-reflection. One might go down the line of team members one by one and ask them how they have experienced making their own lesson plan. Did they enjoy being more in control? Did they find it difficult? What went well and what ended up being more challenging for them? What would they like to do differently next time?

4. Notes

The next few pages have been left intentionally blank. On these pages, you may write down any notes, ideas, sketches etc. that come to mind during the execution of the BYOL project.

