

Workshop 1
The Grundtvig Project and the Good Teacher
Workshop leaders: Geoff Moore; Bernadette Davison,
N.Ireland

When Valentina asked me to do this tribute I was slightly taken aback – not because I didn't want to be involved, rather that everyone I've talked to about Jim, laughs heartily about the thought of Jim being associated with 'Good Teaching Practice'. Those of us who knew Jim are very much aware of his stance on Prison Education – his well known running joke: "Not another fekkín prison, Geoff!" was shared by many of his Grundtvig colleagues. His Polish friends never knew if he was joking or serious.

My name is Geoff Moore and I am the Education Manager of Maghaberry Prison in Northern Ireland. Jim Turley was my Senior Teacher and my best friend in prison education. He was a big man in every way. His laughter was infectious and he spread it around a lot.

I first met Jim in the mid 1980's and it is true to say that over the years he built up a great experience of many different prison regimes. He worked with sentenced and remand prisoners, young offenders and older individuals, both male and female. In fact it's hard to think of a category of inmate that Jim had not worked with. As a manager he had experience of ordinary prisoners, paramilitaries, young prisoners and females. During his last four years at Maghaberry he was solely in charge of the programme for female prisoners of all categories.

When we talk about the qualities the good teacher brings to the Grundtvig project the first thing I can say about Jim is that he brought a wealth of experience to the project. Years of coping with every problem you could imagine and more!

Jim was a prisoners champion, he was always in tune with the thoughts and troubles of his students - never far away from their emotions – he cared passionately about prisoner's rights, their individual needs, legal requirements, resources and facilities. These were the most important constituent parts of Jim's day. When Jim's women were having a bad time on the landings Jim was also having a bad time. In these situations he showed the second quality that I would associate with the good teacher – He listened well! His empathy was enormous. The women really felt they had a champion in Jim. In Grundtvig it is crucial to listen and be in tune with your partner's problems and requirements.

Jim was more than just a shoulder to cry on. He was compassionate, caring and had the depth of knowledge required to be an excellent counsellor in all matters. He had the ability to read people, his mild form of mocking humour is an excellent example of this; he had nicknames for everyone he knew – I was always 'Jolly Geoff' in his presence. These names were never hurtful or insulting; rather they flattered the characters as Jim saw them. My next quality of the good teacher is:

Inclusiveness

That is making everyone feel an equal part of the team, or joke or project – whatever. Jim's parties were legendary among his women. His office – the Prison Library, was often taken over by a dozen or so busy women all baking and preparing food for one celebration or another, every one of them feeling part of the occasion. No one was left out – often to the disgust of the Officers who would have readily disposed of many of his younger pupils. When Jim applied this philosophy to

Grundtvig he always had an individual job lined up for every teacher. He made everyone feel that their contribution to the team was crucial. Along with inclusiveness there are three other very important qualities required by the good teacher in the Grundtvig project and demonstrated to perfection by Jim himself.

One – Have a vision! – Know exactly what you want and how you are going to get there. Jim had his vision 'The Open Doors Magazine' and he made sure everyone else knew what was required of them to complete the vision.

Two – Be a strong leader – don't let the vision and the work be compromised by silly arguments between partners. Jim never allowed arguments to develop – you might well ask how he did this? Simple: and this is the third quality which I believe is crucial to the good Grundtvig teacher:

Be Prepared

Jim was always well prepared. When things were not quite going were Jim wanted them to go, he always managed to stop the argument on some point of order or other just giving him time to deliver his well prepared – in advance – paper explaining what he required everyone to do to make the project successful. He spent many hours writing up project instructions and reports. My own observations down the years would lead me to make the following points in support of Jim's qualities in the last three areas:

1. People who are arguing often have no clear goal, and while arguing no work is being accomplished.
2. People actually like a strong leader with a clear vision; understanding the job to be accomplished is much easier than making up the rules as you go along.
3. It's a simple task when someone actually tells you exactly what you are expected to do. You are not stretched out of your comfort zone.
4. People like to feel part of a team doing a job which adds value to the whole team effort.

Jim had a wide range of teaching skills which he used to his students advantage. He taught History, producing a book outlining the course of Irish history, he taught maths, English and latterly computer skills. All these subjects were taught with a large helping of humour and in line with the Good Teacher theme he was always at the cutting edge of current educational training methods and techniques. He believed in good training always being involved himself and making sure that everyone was included in the training schedules.

The last quality which I would like to mention which is very important to the good teacher in the Grundtvig project and once again is an area in which Jim excelled, is that of building support networks. Jim had teaching friends all over the world. He was in contact with people in America, Australia, the Far East and Africa. Copies of Open Doors were sent to every continent. Not a week went by without Jim telling me about the next visitors to our Department or the latest offer of partnership from educational establishments all over Europe. His e-mail favourites list was six pages long and he kept in contact with all of them.

The sadness of course in all this for me is that when Jim found Grundtvig – that style of learning – that vision of adult life-long achievement – all that seemed to epitomise Jim's zest for life, he was so cruelly taken away from us. Grundtvig was

Jim's hope for the future and he grasped it firmly – In his last three years he truly loved his work and he gave 100% commitment – no one could have asked for more.

When I think about Jim's legacy to me and my colleagues I can honestly say the networks are stronger than ever. The vision is still there and the project work goes from strength to strength. Jim's lasting gift to the Department was the vision of a new project which he made me promise to continue in his absence – This is called 'Bernie' - and I hope to be informing you all about success in this venture over the next three years.

I have taken some photographs of staff and students working at Maghaberry and I hope you agree with me when you look at them, that they show clearly the qualities which I have talked about and make me proud of Jim's memory and of the staff presently engaged in groundbreaking project work at the prison.

After a PowerPoint presentation of photographs from Maghaberry Education department I hand over the workshop to Bernie Davison who is going to do the rest of the workshop on some current research into 'Communication and Reflective Teaching' being undertaken by herself and Jolene Hamill.

The work looks at the impact of the teacher's method of communication on the interaction with the students.

- To explore communication and the problems of communication in prison.
- To examine specific examples of effective and unsuccessful communication in a reflective manner.
- To discuss the role of reflection in teaching.

A Workshop by Bernie Davison and Jolene Hamill

Aims: To explore communication and the problems of communication in prison
To examine specific examples of effective and unsuccessful communication in a reflective manner

To discuss the role of reflection in teaching

I am that tree in the middle of the complex alone being swayed to and fro by the wind; branches moving in every direction, gentle force trying to remain steady but you were like the wind you moved me in ways I could not control. You were a gale that threatened to uproot me and in fact did. I am that tree uprooted and leaning over ready to fall, roots holding struggling to survive. You uprooted me, I have fallen but like that tree I am still hanging on.

(Bernie Davison)

Looking through the bars on these windows watching the wind caress the leaves of the trees all is quiet no one is about. There are here a lot of people. Unseen, locked away in their offices or rooms. Blocks with names like birch and oak signifying a woody place a place of growth hope and strength. Just names. Voices raised, a split second, then quiet again. A door creaks open or shuts. Noises echo fleeting along a corridor. This quiet locked lonely place is me.

Communication as an instrument for organizational change : A reflective perspective

For Humans language is one of their finest assets, it is an important skill to be able to communicate with fellow humans. But most importantly being able to understand fellow humans, not just hear the words but understand the meaning of the words.

Communication is necessary in not only the human world but also the mechanical world: for example, when a computer exchanges information with another system, it broadcasts its intention, in accordance with several communication rules or protocols. Communicate is the translation from the Latin word *communicare* meaning "to impart (knowledge) or exchange (thoughts) by speech, writing, gesture etc" definition from dictionary; or as L Walkin said, it is:

"Communication is the art of successfully sharing meaningful information with people by means of an interchange of experience. The important word is 'successfully', which implies that a desired behaviour change results when the receiver takes in the message"

These are helpful descriptions to show the value of controlling and refining communications skills, which can be visual and well as audible. When a computer connects to the Internet it will make a number of tones that indicates to us the user that it is dialling via the modem to the Internet Service Provider, thus representing the establishment of a two-way conversation and agreement on the structures for the exchange of data. Even whilst operating under tightly defined rules, occasionally the communication goes wrong and the conversation ends abruptly. The human brain is far more complex and powerful than any computer, and human communication is not controlled by established formalised regulations. It is therefore not surprising that human communication frequently goes wrong and the intended message is not transmitted.

Communication in the classroom

In the classroom it is the teacher's role to communicate, to input knowledge; a problem arises when the teachers' use of language might be inappropriate for the group of students they are working with. Research has shown that teachers tend to like the sound of their own voices, and thus the majority of time spent with a class is taken up with the teacher talking. Some students may prefer being given manuals and handouts with or without explanation, some hate or prefer lecture based classes, having to take copious amounts of notes; the problem arises with many students that the notes are hurried and untidy making deciphering an impossible task. During classes where the teacher talks for the duration of the lesson; even the most astute student can miss parts of the lecture, due to the fact that people can only sustain concentration for so long.

As a pupil, I remember teachers who continually encouraged and reminded students that they were " highly prized members of the team". Any pupil who was not listening was " not playing their part"; some teachers would throw a wooden handled duster at the pupil, and make the pupil feel like a child by the teacher, who was acting in the Parent ego state. (As described by Eric Berne, in his theory Transactional Analysis) I remember teachers who exercised total intimidation, total control of the pupils, in the manner of the Controlling parent.

Over the years I have observed these behaviours while teaching students computer applications. Some students, usually male, can't wait to get started, generally without having read the instructions, or listened to what has been said by me the

teacher, or have declined to observe a demonstration, thinking they know what to do – only to complain that they are stuck, or the computer isn't doing what they want it to do, or it hasn't worked the way it was supposed to. The child ego state, like the workman, always blames his tools – or the teacher! Other students want to be children. They need to be told every stage of a process and are afraid of trying something new in case they break something or embarrass themselves. I try to spot these types (ego states) early on in a course and pair the different types for practical work. Although it is not always easy to get people to move seats, especially adults.

Problems of communication in the classroom and within the organization

"Nothing is more uncomfortable than a social hiatus, a period of silent, unstructured time when no one present can think of anything more interesting to say than. Don't you think the walls are perpendicular tonight? The eternal problem of the human being is how to structure his waking hours." Berne(1966)

This refers to Bernes theory on transactional analysis. When two people meet it is the meeting place of six ego states. Parent Adult Child + PAC. It is the unit of human communication. Sometimes communication breaks down between a learner and student and it is difficult to remedy the situation. Learners have a lot of time to think in prison and when they have time to think they can often become preoccupied with issues that would seem trivial to those on the outside. Without a doubt every human being needs structure but education in Maghaberry is the corner stone in this structure, a fact often taken for granted as it is primarily a working prison. The following are examples of when communication broke down; one examining the teacher-student relationship and on examining the flow of communication between management.

A Maghaberry Example Student - Teacher

Recently I had an experience with a student in the corridor. He approached me and demanded why he was not getting his computer class. His tone of voice and his stance were quite threatening and he immediately adopted the child ego state. I was tempted to adopt the child ego state as well, as I am sure you all have in the past but being the professional that I am, I transcended the child to the logic of Adult. I explained calmly to the learner that I am not responsible for getting him over to education and that on that day I was busy. I informed him that I was in the process of developing a web design course for him and he would be able to come to education next week. The student remained in the child state and got extremely angry and eventually the situation was interrupted by the action of prison staff.

Poor communication can lead to misunderstandings, be a waste of time and create mistakes, therefore having a drastic effect on individual relationships, which result in dissatisfaction spreading throughout the class, leading to non-cooperation. A concerted effort is needed from all concerned to ensure that good communication is maintained.

A Maghaberry example: Institutional Example

Another example of a failure to communicate effectively was when computers were installed in one of the landings. Due to a break down in communication between prison staff and education, other teachers were banned from using computers

during their classes. This was contrary to what had been agreed by the teachers and management within the education department. The information was not passed on to staff on the landings and so students walked out of the class because they could not use the computers. This had long lasting repercussions for all of the classes. Attendance dropped significantly and many students lost faith in education.

The skill to create understanding goes a long way towards providing an environment compatible with successful communication and learning, thereby enhancing group associations. Non-verbal and verbal signals play an important part in the communication process, gestures, body language and facial expressions help to reinforce or substitute different forms of communication.

First impressions gathered from face-to-face communication generally consist of taking turns to speak. When the teacher speaks pupils are expected to listen, only asking questions when the teacher has finished. But looking closer, people resort to a mixture of non-verbal behaviour that maintains the steady flow of communication. This consists of smiles, frowns, eye movements, head-nods, laughter, bodily contact, posture and language to name a few. These non-verbal cues are an important part of maintaining and regulating conversations. Speech is generally backed up by intricate gestures that can affect the meaning of what is being said. Repeated movements are known as mannerisms, these are generally unplanned and are an unconscious act on the part of the speaker, and can be the source of amusement, leading to mimicry, class disruption and some embarrassment.

Pupils' facial expressions provide invaluable feedback to the teacher. Glazed or closed eyes indicate tiredness, boredom or lack of interest, fidgeting indicates similar feelings. Raised eyebrows are signs of disbelief, surprise, and or puzzlement. The teacher can judge the class' attitude to them by the pupils body posture, it is a good mood indicator. Thus control of the class means that the teacher has to be aware of the signals given off by the pupils around them.

As a teacher I have had to be personally aware of the individuals around me, it is important to watch closely, I can see when a student is having a problem by their facial expression, basically I can see it in their eyes. Also when a pupil puts their head down you know they are bored with the lecture, and only want to sleep or get out. As a student I have done the same, having fell asleep during a long lecture, but the teacher needs to be aware of this, either the subject matter is of the type that it is boring, e.g. Computer Theory, or the teacher themselves is boring. The use of words and phrases can show that people think in different ways, and thereby learn in different ways:

Reflecting

Problems in communication are often not recorded or reflected upon within organizations and reflection is such a valuable instrument in understanding the problems associated with communication. When a teacher has finished a class there is often not enough time set aside to evaluate the lesson and to examine learning and barriers to learning. When a student says something that we are not expecting because of the pressures of work imposed upon us we do not have time to examine the psychology behind it or read the non verbal cues but if we follow Schon's model we should all strive as conscientious practitioners to record our daily reflections on the learning process both from what we have learned ourselves and what the

students will take away with him. Schon defined a professional as someone who lays "claim to extraordinary knowledge in matters of great social importance." We should use this wealth of knowledge and record it in a learning journal which is beneficial to our practice.

I thought for this entry, I'd do something new
And something you might find interesting too
I'll write in poem form and see how it goes
And analyse my latest highs and lows

Last week we examined our different learning styles
And made us all break out in smiles
There were those who were pragmatic and some of us theory based
But this session will never go to waste

It is so important to examine the needs of the learner
And styles should never be left on the back burner
We must use them as a tool to colour our teaching
And create a holistic approach as the inspectors keep preaching

My learners enjoy a hands-on way of acquiring skills
And visual aids and good resources and all the frills
Students find it easier if there are a variety of ways
To teach them truths and fill their days

We now use Barsch to keep us afloat
And knowledge of Honey and Mumford we can gloat
I am learning as the days go by
And I am trying to ask all the time WHY?

Why am I doing this, what will they learn?
What do they need, what qualifications do they yearn?
The area of teaching is limitless with area to be explored
With paths to be taken and areas to be revered and adored

I think I chose this path because it's where I can create
And philosophise and analyse and worry and debate
It is challenging and every day is not the same
But I will carry on despite the wind and the rain!
Jolene Hamill

Schon believed that teachers should always try to contextualise their resources. He proposed the use of knowledge in action through self-instruction apprenticeship in a real world context and mentoring. Numerous trainers fall short of living up to their professional status but are instead dramatically conservative, actively defensive and highly resistant to change. According to Schon the true professional must take part in reflective practice thinking about how you are teaching whilst teaching (reflection in action) as well as thinking back after the session (reflection on action).

Conclusion

The good teacher will 'mix and match' examples of each into his communication with the class, sub-consciously picking up on the nuances from the students as the

lesson progresses to ensure that the classroom atmosphere is the most suitable for absorbing knowledge. Plus teachers should bear in mind that every student has a language ceiling that can be difficult to go beyond. It is through constant reflection that this is achieved and evaluated.

