Moving from teacher to trainer (MTT1)

Resource 6: Considering the effectiveness of a session

Resource 6: Considering the effectiveness of a session

Key Point 1: Just because she looks miserable doesn’t mean she’s not enjoying it!

It is sometimes difficult to read an audience correctly, particularly when they don’t know each other and you don’t know them. Trainers need to be aware of the impact that their session is having on the audience as it unfolds. You will know whether they are having an impact if, for example, groups are on task and discussion is lively and if people talk to you during or after the session. You need to try to read the impact if they have decided on a long input ‘lecture style’ and be ready to change tack if it is not working. But how do you know it’s not working and that you’re losing the attention of the audience? Here are some signs. You may be able to add to this list from your own experience as a trainer:

* Several people sitting back, looking upwards
* Several people looking out of the window
* People not making eye contact with you
* People talking to their neighbour over a sustained period

But trainers shouldn’t *assume* they are not having an impact if:

* People are looking down – they may be taking notes
* People occasionally talk to their neighbour – in some cultures this indicates interest in what is being said
* They look miserable or cross or perplexed – this sometimes indicates extreme concentration

What can be done if trainers feel they are losing their audience?

First and foremost, don’t give up. It is unlikely that you have ‘lost’ everyone. You may have noticed one disgruntled person and are assuming that the whole audience feels the same. This is unlikely. Always plan a variety of activities of different kinds: some allowing people to sit and listen, some allowing movement, some allowing private thought, some allowing discussion. Always plan well so that you have absolute confidence in your material. Teachers will expect trainers to be authoritative so avoid being apologetic, as mentioned earlier. This undermines the confidence of the audience.

Advice for nervous trainers

Be aware of how you stand, of how you present yourself to your audience. If you wring your hands and are stooped you look uncertain, unconfident and unhappy to be there. Straighten your back – imagine there is a string passing through the centre of your body and someone is pulling it taut from above. If you can, use expansive hand and arm movement as if you are a priest at the altar! This will give the impression that you are confident and ready to enjoy the session.

The most likely scenario is that teachers will enjoy these familiarisation and planning sessions on the Pedagogy Modules with trainers who are likely to be their peers. It is important, however, to remember that the training context does have many similarities to the classroom. People may react to the message (which they may not like) rather than the individual i.e. just because a teacher is unhappy about the situation in their school doesn’t mean that they don’t appreciate the work of the trainer. Indeed coaches and trainers who are peers are the very people who are likely to enthuse teacher groups as they demonstrate how to bring the curriculum alive.