**The role of the teacher in a teaching process interlacing spirituality, art, and education  
Jana Ozimek**

**Interlacing**  
The topic of today's lecture will be spirituality – art – education and how these elements are interwoven in the very educational process. Let us begin with a poem written by a man who we are going to talk about later. This is Vladimir Truhlar, PhD, a poet, priest and teacher, a man who was himself the creator and interpreter of many Slovenian authors.

**Vladimir Truhlar: The Word**   
The bright red  
translucent algae  
itself  
on the seabed.  
High are  
the steamers' ways,  
high above it  
the words  
of people.  
Only the sea speaks to it,  
far away she speaks to it,  
she speaks to it in bright red,  
she speaks through talks,  
she carries it when she speaks.

And she speaks about one only.

This poem tries to convey that there is only one Logos which is an artist's source when creating something that has never been written before but has existed from the very moment when a man began to use the Word.

So the subject of a poetic spiritual experience is the 'absolute'. Artists approach ontological mysteries. They reveal logical and rational reality approaching inaccessible depths of the absolute. The role of poetry and spiritual experience is the role of someone inviting and introducing into the space of mysterious beauty and limitless wealth of earthly colours ... (Pibernik, 2011: 233)  
The world is truly good, it is the object of God's love. (Cp. John 3, 16)

Vladimir Truhlar, a poet, a professor at the Faculty of Theology, a man who had thought a lot about spirituality in poetry, was also a creator himself as well as an interpreter and he wrote a Lexicon of Spirituality (1974), in which he also considered upbringing/education. Let me quote him:  
"Education originates from the phrase to “pull something out of material and shape, create it at the same time.” The educational process assumes the teacher’s confidence in sleeping, yet unwakened forces which need to be adjusted for personal self-actualization. To be more precise: it is about confidence in the manageability of somebody else in his willingness and commitment to shape the interventions of an educator – it is the faith in the power of freedom and responsibility of an individual. Moreover, education presupposes from a teacher the willingness to lead an individual to something nobler and more chaste, but not modelling an individual as violently as a thing that can be manufactured and is no longer a person. An educator should be attentive to bring to others only what is pure and noble." (ibid: 377)

Truhlar, in the same Lexicon of Spirituality, also considers what a work of art is: "A work of art is something that is entirely its own entity: it is open – things in it “show experiences which have their deep roots in the experience of the Absolute that a man is able to relive. In order to get to know the work of art it is not enough that you look at it and listen to it as we usually look at and listen to the things that constantly surround us. The work of art opens a space that a man can enter, breathe and move in as well as simply be present with things and people who reveal themselves in the work of art ...” (Romano Guardini) But this cannot be achieved without contemplation, which we, the people of the modern age, might need more than anything else." (Truhlar, 1974: 640)

The title of today's lecture is the role of the teacher in a teaching process interlacing spirituality, art, and education. The first word is spirituality. In order to create something that is unusual, beautiful and at the same time given by inspiration, the true Spirit that blows must first permeate an artist – only then can art have an effect on a reader, viewer, or listener. This Spirit must permeate a teacher for him to be able to recognize this Spirit that is beyond our comprehension and also be able to pass it on through the learning process. In this process of spirituality, art and education the teachers must identify where and what their role is.

Their role is twofold. On the one hand teachers are the ones who recognize and then they are the ones who pass on. Their role can be the role of a recognizer and a facilitator. On the one hand, the teachers take the works of art that have already been realized and pass them on to continue with their interpretation, on the other hand they must recognize artistic tendencies in their students and guide them to develop them. Moreover, teachers must be supportive to young people so that they identify a spark from God in themselves, which needs to be cultivated in order to be developed in all its fullness. In this case the teacher has the role of a facilitator, whereas a teacher in the role of a 'teacher designer' has to step back into the background.

I am going to present some practical examples from my own teaching practice to show you how the roles mentioned can interact with various forms of teaching. A practical example of an active teacher and a 'teacher designer' can be a school celebration.

**An active teacher and a 'teacher designer'**

**A school celebration**

Firstly, teachers in charge need to have a clear idea of ​​what they want to convey to students, parents, fellow teachers, and then carry it out together with the students. They must look for appropriate literature as well as for students who will be able to carry out a teacher’s idea through various works of art. Everything depends on the teacher: how pure they are, how they can identify spirituality in works of art, that 'something beyond' through which they will affect others, firstly student collaborators, and then the student viewers and listeners. Nowadays a school celebration cannot be a mere recitation and a school choir’s performance, but should be a combination of several arts. Our school celebration, which was entitled 'My world is colourful', intertwined two concepts that young people are interested in today. They were homeland – foreign country. Based on a survey of what young people today think of these two concepts the students created a short film that became a part of the event. A teacher today should master or at least be able to use a variety of media.

The whole celebration was an [interlacement](http://sl.pons.com/prevod/angle%C5%A1%C4%8Dina-sloven%C5%A1%C4%8Dina/interlacement) [of](http://sl.pons.com/prevod/angle%C5%A1%C4%8Dina-sloven%C5%A1%C4%8Dina/of) words (Župančič, Pikalo, Podlogar, Pavček, Kosovel), dance, folk and modern music (saxophone) as well as acting. I used all kinds of fine arts. At the beginning there was the school choir's performance, which was followed by talking as a recitation of two students of contemporary dance, folk music which was performed by young musicians improvising on indigenous musical patterns, group recitations, which attracted to the stage a dramatic play performed by two protagonists who had written the dialogue themselves. A woman's voice represented the homeland, attachment to the local environment, conservative values; whereas a male voice represented the foreign country, progress, new values. The idea was that it does not matter where a young person lives; what counts is the love of one's fellow man, boy or girl, and the love of one’s homeland.

The role of me as a teacher was to look for an idea/topic and appropriate texts to support it; to find the right students to be able to carry out the idea adequately and teach them to interpret the text in an appropriate way, while they had to find their own expression completely by themselves. I had to search for the right quality musicians who were also able to improvise on stage, and whose music would fit in with the concept of the celebration. It is good if a teacher is a connoisseur of music as this can be of great help in the more effective execution of an event. Given the fact that a school celebration is technically quite a challenging project which demands a good teacher – director, the teacher has to find students who can master lights, curtains and ICT, which can be used for several purposes. A school celebration can be very ornate indeed, but if the whole gadgetry does not work as it should, the performance fails. There is also a problem because the teacher has to work with a large number of students belonging to different grades. The teacher needs to be able to coordinate rehearsal practice, which is often a very stressful job.

In this case, the teacher is working in all three areas: 1) spirituality – the teacher aims at providing the appropriate texts to flow into other people; 2) the arts – the teacher must know the different languages ​​of each art through which they seek to influence the audience; 3) education – the teacher educates the performers and then indirectly the audience when they pass on the main idea of the celebration or ideas that the audience find in the performance themselves. Our performance was seen by 900 people, which was a rather large audience to be influenced and have a message passed across. Without the Holy Spirit, however, the Spirit who works beyond all earthly strivings, this celebration would not have had any effect.

**Special lessons within the curriculum**

Another example is especially designed lessons at school.

I will present two projects that I carried out in the classroom. The first project was called 'romance in a slightly different way'. Considering the fact that the human brain cell consists of a nucleus and dendrites, people find it much easier to remember things that are integrated. We would have liked this concept applied to our schools but this desire seems to be unreachable at the moment. Since I wish for such classes myself I try to invite to the class other teachers, for example a philosopher, a historian or an artist. Since our students underutilize handiwork, I wished that at the end of lectures on romanticism students would be able to create some motifs that were recognized by the Romantics. Basing their ideas on Slovenian and foreign romantic music and the recitation of Prešeren's gazelles, students had to create objects out of clay which they had identified as motifs in the poems within a six-lesson course. They formed different creations from clay, vases ('Let my poem, like a shrine, contain – your name' – one of Prešeren's gazelles), statues of the poet Prešeren, and other products. Students at our high schools are no longer able to do any practical work in art lessons. That is the case only in the first grade and even then only in theory.

I managed to carry out this project with the help of my colleague who provides clay courses, has a stove and knows how to motivate students for this kind of art; and a colleague who teaches music, so the students listened to how the same romantic motifs appear in literature as well as in music and art. In this way, students were able to obtain a holistic experience of this literary period. For me as a teacher, something else was extremely valuable: I perceived my students in a totally different light. A student who may not be as skilled verbally can be very talented in creating his/her own works of art. This was not graded but nevertheless gave, on the one hand, each student the opportunity to demonstrate his/her talents; on the other hand the teachers were able to see their students not only through 'usual' eyes but a student could also arouse jealousy in the teachers themselves – for they were not able to do something that their students were capable of. Considering this there can be a total revaluation of assessment and thoughts that a teacher possesses of a specific student, whereas a student is given the opportunity to show his/her talent and creativity. The fact that every student is different, that they are able to create with their hands something new that has not been created by anyone before was notable. In such a project it is important that teachers themselves are also involved because they become equal with the students in the process. The hierarchy breaks down and only play and the Spirit work here. The students were listening to world and Slovenian romantic music during the project.

Another such creative project was connected with extensive reading. Each student had to create a literary magazine on the theme of a book chosen for extensive reading which was agreed on with the teacher. I myself assigned students to choose from Shakespeare's Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet or Cervantes’ Don Quixote. In this literary gazette students had to show computer, art and verbal skills. Students had to name their magazine, create a cover, and write an editorial in which they had to explain why they opted for such a title of the magazine. Then they processed the content of the work, the motifs, the idea and its linguistic features. The students had to present the chosen literary work of art, the place where it originated from, write an interview in which they had to demonstrate knowledge of the author. Besides this, the students had to write a commentary, an assessment and create a public invitation to a performance or presentation of the work as well as a public thank you. The students had to find other works of art that used the motif from the original work. On top of that, the students had to create an advertisement for a product that originated from an idea found in the work of art they had chosen.

Using this form of work a teacher can recognize the talents of each student and here, primarily, appears a teacher's role as a 'recognizer'. Teachers have to be curious, they have to respect their students as their younger fellow colleagues in the future, but at the same time they must remain an authority since they show, by their openness, to young people the way to the beauty which has its origin in the Absolute. A student may be more talented than a teacher, but they are only at the beginning of a path, so it is the job of the teacher as an older and more experienced person, as the one who sees the path to its goal, to help the students who are entrusted to them to recognize in themselves the very best they possess, and help the students to transform it into the substance that leads to transcendence. If all this is interlaced, then anyone can do their part. There is no teacher without a student, as there is no student without a teacher.

Spirituality can flow only through people who know how to articulate this 'something beyond us', who know how to set music to it; it can flow also through teachers who are mediators among artists and students.

If everyone plays his/her part, beauty will radiate through all people involved in this process.  
Let me finish with a poem by Truhlar that says that Logos is that spiritual language of an artist, through which only one word actually speaks and that word is Logos. He reveals Himself through different ways from the world that is infinitely beautiful and transcendent, which is not open to everyone in the same way, but has existed from the beginning and will remain till the end of the world.

Translated from Slovenian into English by Bernarda KEJŽAR

**References**

*Sveto pismo stare in nove zaveze: slovenski standardni prevod* (2007). Ljubljana: Svetopisemska družba Slovenije.

Truhlar, Vladimir (2011): *Zbrano delo / Vladimir Truhlar* *(editor: France Pibernik)* Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU.

Truhlar, Vladimir (1974): *Leksikon duhovnosti*. Celje: Mohorjeva družba.