

Time to Think

Open University Journeys in British and Irish prisons during the years of conflict, 1972-2000

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Alan Walbridge**

Interviewed by: **Philip O'Sullivan**

Date of interview: **25/03/2013**

Important

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Clip title: I am not kind of concerned with how I was seen, it was how I felt.

Duration: 00:02:11

Clip start point in full interview: 00:02:47

Clip end point in full interview: 00:04:53

Interview identifier: 049_T_01

Description:

Alan Walbridge, Open University Associate Lecturer in Technology reflects on his practical teaching experiences working with audio visual materials and home experiment kits and how he felt teaching in the Maze and Long Kesh Prison was easier for him because he was English and because he taught factual courses, not ones based on opinions like Social Sciences.

Transcript:

So you were in right at the very start, it must have been one of the first years they started teaching in Northern Ireland, was it, '71 or—?

Yes, as I say, I think Technology wasn't the very first, I think there was something already in place but to back up the courses then, a lot of it came, of course we didn't have all this wonderful television and CDs and DVDs. There were tapes, there were cassettes and they had to send out cassette recorders to people. There were home experimental kits- HEKs. For example, there was one which involved lots of plastic and ball bearings and you made your own digital computer with it and you rolled ball bearings down and it added up and it subtracted if you got it perfectly level. And on top of all of this, there were summer schools where people actually had hands on, doing experimental work. Now I believe this has changed, not for the better as far as I am concerned. Now out of that relationship- because we knew the Staff Tutors as friends basically- as new courses came along, as new requirements such as prisons came along, it would be a phone call saying 'Would you mind or could you do this?' Now I found, I think there were two points that made prison teaching easier for me, one: being English, I was more broad minded, put it how you want. I didn't have that 'If you are not for me, you are against me' attitude—

You were seen as maybe being as, maybe an outsider to an extent or external, independent—?

No, I am not concerned with how I was seen, it was how I felt. I didn't have any hang ups with that side or that side. And the other thing which I think made it an awful lot easier, is that what I was doing was fact based. There were no opinions coming into it, either from me or from the students. Now doing something like Social Science or Politics, obviously it wouldn't be such an easy route, but doing a purely factual subject, there was no conflict whatsoever.