FLiTE

Read through this story and see what you notice in this student-teacher's story.

I wasn't ready!

The issue:

When I started the centre-based sessions we had a session on learning theories quite near the beginning of the course. I couldn't see the point of it. It did not seem relevant to my practice. I just wanted to know what I needed to do to cope with the behaviour issues that were occurring in my classes. I felt overwhelmed with finding my feet in a school, getting on with the teachers and the pupils, knowing where to find the things I needed and what I had to do for the course. It was much harder than I expected to get the class to pay attention and to do the things they needed to do.

What happened?

When I went to my second school, I felt much more settled, I found my feet more quickly and felt more settled in the profession. At this point I felt I could relate to the theories that we had learnt about in that early session. They helped me to understand better how children learn so they became relevant to me. I was able to discuss some of the ideas with the mentor and use them in the way I planned the lessons.

What was learnt?

In the end I suppose I just wasn't ready for learning theories so soon, as I had not had much experience in school and I struggled to feel settled enough to think about theories! I did grow more settled and confident through my time in the first school, but I felt I grew more quickly in the new school community. I became much more interested in the pupils and their learning, rather than how I could get all the right things done and manage the tasks and the pupils during the lessons.

Empowering student-teachers

1. What are the challenges here for the student-teacher?
2. Is there empowerment? Is there a growth in self-confidence?

The student-teacher does not mention the role of any of the teacher educators from school or the centre, either in her induction into the school environment or regarding connections between centre-based sessions and school experience, and vice versa.

3. In what ways could the teacher mentor help in the first school?
4. In what ways could the centre-based teacher educator help?
5. Have you any other suggestions that might help to empower the student-teacher?

Consider what you have learnt from the story and the activity. Share this with the group.

Taking it further - The purpose of theory

Theories are useful practical tools. Like keys, they can unlock what is going on in practice and help you gain new perspectives on complex situations. Boyd (2014) explains how learning as professionals involves engaging with the interplay between public knowledge (theory) around our field and the experience or 'wisdom' that comes from our practice.

- How could you help a student-teacher to understand the purpose and benefits of theories?

Boyd, P. (2014). Using "modelling" to improve the coherence of initial teacher education. In P. Boyd, A. Szplit, & Z. Zbróg (Eds.), Teacher educators and teachers as learners: international perspectives (pp. 51–73). Wydawnictwo Libron.

Taking it further – teacher development

The student-teacher recognised that she was growing more quickly in the school community in the second school than she had in the first school. At the beginning of her course, she was more interested in herself and what she was doing and the tasks in the classroom. Later on she became more interested in the needs of the pupils and their learning. This is a recognised professional trajectory for teacher development, which is captured in this video on Developmental Mentoring for initial teacher education (www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftn-2PExAvw).

- Who would benefit from exploring this theory? Where could you introduce them to these ideas?

marnix academie