



Teacher Educator Story 6



Read through this story and see what teacher educator dilemma(s) you can spot.

This year, together with a colleague from the Higher Education Institution (HEI), I was responsible for the support meetings for a group of student teachers from a cluster of schools. I am also the school-based teacher educator (SBTE) for a number of these student teachers.

A colleague of mine is the teacher mentor of one of these student teachers, Julia. During the placement, I receive signals from my colleague that Julia has many targets. During the support meetings this doesn't really come up with Julia. I notice that she misses the support meetings a number of times. When I ask her personally after a meeting how she's getting on with the placement, she is short and says only 'It's going well'. She then rushes away. At a later moment I try to speak to her again but now separately and Julia indicates that there are private problems at the workplace that she'll discuss with me.

A week later I hear that Julia has had an observation visit from the institute-based teacher educator (IBTE) and that the teacher mentor and IBTE came to the conclusion that Julia will have to extend her placement to work on her targets. The first session after this, Julia isn't at the support meeting and a week later I receive the announcement from her teacher mentor, my colleague, that Julia has stopped the placement. Julia hasn't contacted me about this; not in my role in facilitating the support meetings nor in my role as SBTE. After a conversation with my colleague, Julia's teacher mentor, I plan to contact Julia's IBTE and arrange an appointment. Due to other work priorities, I didn't make it. It's now two months later and the IBTE has contacted our school and I want to arrange a conversation with the IBTE and Julia.

My dilemma has several aspects for me. The first aspect is my double role: SBTE and facilitator of the support group. During the support meetings, I want to pay attention to all student teachers but a number of student teachers want more of my attention. At those meetings I try to talk with the student teachers that I also deal with as a SBTE. However, I notice that I don't get any personal contact with them in those meetings.

The second aspect has to do with the question 'Who is responsible for the student teacher's learning?' I would like to know what's going on, but I also feel that I should keep my distance because the student teacher is responsible for their own learning. When I push the door a bit and the student teacher shuts the door, what should I do? I have chosen to focus mainly on contact via the teacher mentor.

The third aspect has to do with communication between the HEI and school. Am I the one who needs to contact the IBTE? At first, I thought so. Now that I've not done it due to lack of time, and the IBTE contacted me, I think that's fine too. As a SBTE, I inform the teacher mentors about the student teachers. This raises the question 'Who is responsible for the contact between the IBTE and the training school?'

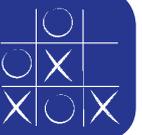
I experience the cooperation between the HEI and workplace as far as the support meetings are concerned as very pleasant and valuable. Student teachers also point out that they experience this as added value. I find the cooperation at workplace level between the HEI and school (SBTEs/mentors) more difficult.



Alternative endings...

Role playing

- Read the story. Within the group allocate one person to take the role of each of the participants in the story. Ask them to describe the challenge from their perspective. What alternative endings would they give the story?
- How would you deal with each aspect that the SBTE is experiencing as a dilemma?
- Reflect on your learning from this story and on participating in the activity. Share with the group.



Approaching complex issues

It can be useful to consider how you approach complex and multi-layered issues in practice. To help you gain a meta-level understanding, step back and consider how you approached dealing with the complex task that the SBTE faces in this story.

Are you like a skydiver who likes to have an overview to know where you are going?

Finds creative solutions

Sees new and alternative ways of doing things

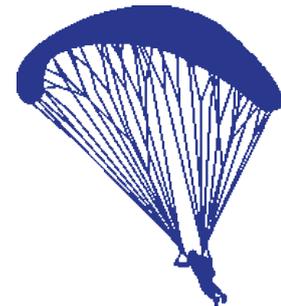
Has a holistic approach, getting a feel and finding a purpose

Uses trial and error

Is easily distracted

Can forget important details

Rushes into answers



Are you like an explorer who takes things step by step?

Organises things well

Sees links between ideas

Sets clear goals and priorities

Reads instructions carefully

Is narrowly focussed

Is often preoccupied with details

Resists new approaches

Or are you a bit of both?

Knowing your preferences can help you broaden your approach and help you to collaborate better.