



Teacher Educator Story 12



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

Rosalind was a historian, a graduate from a top university, black, and from a working class background. After graduating, Rosalind worked for several years as a policy advisor for a government department before deciding to train as a secondary history teacher. Her main school-based experience was at a neighbouring school between September and April after which her second school-based experience was in my school where I was Head of Department and SBTE, having oversight for the student teachers. Rosalind had started her course well, passing the first end of term assessment with no major concerns or issues but she had not met the standards for the second end of term assessment. It was agreed that her IBTE and I would reassess her after two weeks in her second school. In not meeting the standards for this assessment, Rosalind's first school mentor felt that she lacked confidence and presence in the class, her lessons did not have a clear learning objective or focus and her lesson activities did not engage pupils sufficiently and were not differentiated. It was perceived that the difficulties faced by Rosalind in her first school were complicated by her becoming pregnant during the period of school-based experience, with some absences in the early stages of her pregnancy. She was due to give birth in the August.

On first meeting Rosalind, I was struck by the contrast between my first impressions of her and the reasons given for her not meeting the standards. To me, Rosalind appeared to be a quietly confident, warm, funny and open person. One of the requirements of student teachers for their second school experience was for them to 'go in cold' with at least one class by teaching the pupils the very first time they meet them. The rationale for this was to prepare each student teacher for the beginning of their year as a newly qualified teacher in September when they would be expected to teach a number of different classes on first meeting. It was planned for Rosalind to 'go in cold' with one of my mixed ability, Year 8 classes, who could be challenging – chatty and with some low-level disruption. The lesson was very successful; Rosalind was a calm and confident presence in the classroom, effectively dealing with unwanted behaviour; the lesson was clearly focused and learning activities engaged all pupils and helped them make progress. Yes, there were areas that needed to be developed and improved, for example, stretch and challenge for the more able, but to me it was clear that Rosalind could teach. During the feedback afterwards, Rosalind started by focusing on what had gone wrong in the lesson, and I prompted her several times to focus on the positives and what had gone well. Once Rosalind had recognised what had gone well in the lesson, and importantly why, she appeared to relax, and we could constructively discuss what she could do differently next time. From this initial lesson and feedback, Rosalind went from strength to strength in her practice, comfortably passing her reassessment and successfully completing her final assessment and the course. She was always too discreet and professional to go into detail, but I was aware from her university tutor that there had been difficulties in her relationship with her first school mentor, particularly once she said she was pregnant. In August, Rosalind had a healthy baby boy, and returned to teaching to start her year as a newly qualified teacher outside of the area.

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Looking back, the key factors that enabled Rosalind to complete her teacher training successfully were:

- a willingness to take a student teacher [or any colleague for that matter] at face value and not to pre-judge on what had happened elsewhere;
- the importance of emphasising the positives in a student teacher's practice during feedback;
- providing student teachers the space to critically reflect in a positive and supportive manner; and
- the opportunity for a student teacher to start afresh if a period of school-based training does not work out.



Do you recognize the challenge?

Dealing with challenges

- Read the story and consider what the challenge is. Discuss with your group.
- In what way do you identify with this incident? Have you experienced anything similar?
- What would you do in this situation? What choices would you make? Discuss together.
- Is Rosalind empowered?
- Does Rosalind's self-confidence grow?
- How do you know? What causes this to happen?



Reflecting together

- Reflect on your learning from this story. Is there something that you can take with you to develop your own practice, or the practice in your partnership?
- Discuss these ideas together.