



Teacher Educator Story 8



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

I am a secondary institute-based teacher educator (IBTE) with several years' experience. When I saw Michael, I wondered what had happened. He was tense, and his eyes were downcast. Yes, he wanted to talk to me to see if I'd already heard what was going on at school... Visibly moved by what was happening, we looked for a place to talk.

The school-based teacher educator (SBTE) overseeing the students on placement in the school, had previously emailed me. The message was that the school management and Michael's teacher mentor were in contact with the police; there was a hassle with some of the pupils. It was really important that I see Michael today. 'Well, it was quite something' I heard him say in a defeated voice. He carefully outlined the situation that had taken place two days ago. Coming into the staff room, he saw a colleague showing his mobile to another colleague. 'Look...' said this colleague. Michael saw a picture of himself in a flash and shouted amazed 'Hey, that's me!' The colleagues included Michael, and together they looked at an Instagram account. Michael's picture was posted on a 'weird' account associated with some strange insinuations about paedophiles.

Michael looked at me with wide eyes, 'who does things like this?' and then 'why are they doing this to me?' He felt defeated and wanted no stone unturned. 'I want to know why they do this' and he asked me not to rest until his photo and the text on Instagram were removed. His mentor attempted to find out via social media to whom the account belonged and how the information could be removed. The police let us get on with it. Michael wanted nothing more than to tell the truth and 'my photo with that nonsense removed from that account, as soon as possible.' 'Why do pupils do this? Why me?' With these pressing questions, Michael's resilience and tolerance were being tested.

Like Michael, I was also affected. What was the best way to guide him working with his colleagues? The school regularly works with student teachers. I knew Michael's doubts about his career choice and saw that this event hit him deeply. He kept asking himself 'Why me? What did I do?' He and his colleagues had a suspicion about where the insinuations had come from. The head teacher, in collaboration with the police, tried to speed up the investigation. Michael was involved in the investigation, but the three weeks in which the conversations took place were a rollercoaster for him. Together with his mentor, he decided which lessons he wanted to teach. I was informed regularly about developments and maintained contact with Michael's tutor and the school management.

He spoke openly in our conversation and told me he was embarrassed. Carefully, I tried to make him look through the eyes of a teacher. What choices presented themselves? Situations happen, what do you need to consider and how do you handle them? We gave him space.

Michael had told his family immediately about the obstacles he had encountered and they were a great support for him. In the third week he shared his story in a peer group meeting with other student teachers. He showed his embarrassment alongside his courage to continue.

Michael undertook little or no initiative in his school-based learning, but he kept coming to school. It seemed as if he wanted to prove something to others and himself. On the other hand, his proactivity was gone, he wasn't coping. The SBTE and I discussed how Michael was dealing with what had happened to him. We prepared ourselves for the impending conversation with him. The question was how we could get him to move on. We decided to start from his

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experience. He has to be able to deal with dilemmas that arise for teachers today. The school has more pupils than those involved in the upheaval that overwhelmed Michael. A teacher also provides a contribution to social values in addition to taking care of classes. The reality demands immediate action, the responsibility to honour existing commitments and to take up tasks again. We agreed to give him the space he needed but to continue to expect him to make progress in his learning. As a stepping-stone, we came up with a question about his proactivity in workplace learning: what are you going to do and how are you going to finish this placement?

Michael was on time and was looking for us in the SBTE's room. Something had changed; with some amazement he shared the conversation that he'd had with the pupil, her parents and the year leader, as part of the investigation. He expressed his admiration for the approach of the year leader. In this conversation Michael had developed, he'd experienced a sort of understanding for the pupil involved. 'I don't know why, but by seeing how the parents dealt with their child in this conversation, I saw that there was much more to it with this pupil', he told us. Suddenly he became aware of a different perspective than his own. This, in turn, brought positive energy with it. We all looked at each other, happy and full of expectation. I responded to Michael's experience: 'That's good, what are you going to do now?' He answered confidently: 'Finish my placement!'

Michael completed his placement. The about-turn that he'd experienced demonstrated that he'd taken ownership of his learning.



How did the teacher educator approach the challenge?

Identifying strategies and learning from challenges

- Read the story and consider together how this student teacher was able to develop personally and professionally through this experience.
- Where did the challenge arise for the IBTE?
- What strategies did he/she use?
- How did these strategies work?
- What was the significant learning for the IBTE and for the student teacher?
- Reflect on your learning from this story and on participating in the activity. Share with the group.