



## Student-teacher Story 4



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

### The issue:

At the beginning of my 3-year undergraduate primary education course there were lectures and seminars designed to strengthen curriculum understanding and pedagogy, with an emphasis on learning from educational theorists. Lots of my peers had prior experience with child development whereas this was my first experience. I also did not have much school experience. The heavily theorised learning at university lasted approximately two months and I felt it was irrelevant and going over my head. I questioned if I had chosen the wrong course and if teaching was even for me.

### What happened?

I started an 8-week placement. By the end of the placement I was teaching up to 25 percent of the timetable. It wasn't until I had this experience in school that I started to relate to the theory that I had been learning at university. This enabled me to come back to university with specific questions and scenarios etc. to use to help me develop further as a teacher.

At university there was an emphasis on different ways of learning, and I was able to develop and understand that I relate and learn in ways that are more visual, active and provide memorable learning experiences. I also thrive when using constructive pedagogical approaches – constructing my own learning and building my pedagogy through first-hand experiences (for example, going to university with a specific behaviour management scenario from placement and working with university lecturers and peers to find suitable responses). My learning was becoming more relevant and having the theory running simultaneously alongside the practice allowed my learning to click into place and I felt I was on the correct course and was passionate about teaching. I was actively reflecting on my learning and was able to identify my strengths and areas for development. This is something I have been encouraging pupils to do, and I have noticed higher levels of engagement as they have an increased attachment to their learning and attainment.

### What was learnt?

By reflecting on myself as a learner, I feel I have a greater understanding of how to relate to children and support them so they don't feel overwhelmed like I did. I was able to understand and recognise that all pupils are unique and therefore learn at different rates, in different ways and with different understanding. This awareness has led to me developing my classroom practice to enable different ways of learning, catering to the specific needs of individual pupils.

As an adult I respond better to lessons that I find engaging, so if I'm not engaged when teaching a lesson then most likely the pupils will not be engaged when learning in the lesson. Not all lessons can be exciting and memorable, but I believe it is crucial for us as teachers to develop engaging practice as much as possible. If a lecture, a seminar or even a staff meeting is not engaging then regardless of whether we are an adult, child, teacher etc. it is less likely to support our learning.



## Give this story a title

- 1. What title would you give this story? Compare your title with the title that others in your group have chosen. What issues have arisen in the story leading to your title?
- 2. The title the student-teacher gave the story was 'Never be an end-product' because they realised the importance of continually learning. Highlight keywords in the story that reveal other underlying beliefs and values of the student-teacher.
- 3. In teacher identity development it can be helpful to be able to recognise the values and beliefs you are holding. In what ways can mentors and tutors support this process?
- 4. This student-teacher mentioned a time when they would have given up on the course they were on. What can we learn that could help student-teacher retention, as:
  - a. A teacher mentor?
  - b. A university tutor or centre-based instructor?
  - c. A partnership?



## Taking it further: developing an identity as a teacher

Korthagen (2004:79) describes an 'onion model' for the different interacting levels influencing teacher change in his discussion about a more holistic approach to teacher education (see table below).

Level	Description	
environment	The students and the school	Outer levels – can be observed by others
behaviour	Actions	
competencies	Knowledge, skills and attitudes	Inner levels – within the teacher
beliefs	Beliefs about learning and teaching which impact behaviour and competencies	
identity	Beliefs about self, as a teacher	Core qualities of the teacher
mission	Purpose or motivation for teaching	

He suggests that there is a need for congruence between these levels, to avoid inner tensions in the teacher, and outward problems in the classroom. Reflect on where and how you address each of these levels of teacher development in your teacher education curriculum.

- Which levels get least attention?
- How could you address this?

Additionally, Korthagen (2004:91) describes three examples of addressing identity and mission through 'core reflection'. For example, becoming aware of an inner tension between an ideal and constraining beliefs and feelings, may clarify the root of many of the problems the student-teacher is facing.

[Korthagen, F. A. J. \(2004\). In search of the essence of a good teacher: towards a more holistic approach in teacher education. \*Teaching and Teacher Education\*, 20, 77–97.](#)

