



## **Gail Bailey: being a teacher educator**

*Nelson and Colne College, Lancashire.*

I first thought about being a teacher as far back as when I was at primary school, but as I started secondary school (and became a slightly rebellious teenager) I decided against university after completing my A levels. However, I did gain a Higher National Diploma (HND) and my career choice led to me having my own small, successful business for the next 23 years. I have no regrets; my experience of self-employment has been an advantage throughout my working life. My background was massage and beauty therapy and, alongside running my business, in 1998 in Clitheroe, Lancashire, I began to teach in Beauty Therapy and Massage and did this for approximately 12 years before taking up a full-time teaching position in 2010. I did my PGCE in 2002 via a distance learning programme offered at the

time by University of Greenwich – this suited my then circumstances and I am grateful for it.

Throughout my early teaching career, I taught from Entry Level up to Level 4 and my part-time lecturing gradually became much more important to me than my business, so it was somewhat fortuitous when a full-time position became available. I loved teaching and I was good at it; inspiring the next generation and watching them develop, make progress and achieve was what drove me, but I still needed more of a challenge.

In 2011 I began a BA (Hons) in Education and Professional Development with Huddersfield University, and the new knowledge and confidence I was gaining led to me applying for, and being appointed as, an Improvement Practitioner role in 2012, where the main focus was on supporting teaching, learning and assessment across our organisation. I combined this role with my other teaching work and now I was regularly delivering professional development sessions to colleagues. Whilst this was terrifying at first I found that, together with my degree studies, I was building up a portfolio of new pedagogical skills, and I was enjoying my new journey immensely. Mid-way through my degree it became clear to me that I wanted to now teach people how to teach and this became my main focus. I had had significant success in my degree with my first year tutor awarding my presentation on lesson observations and the function of Ofsted 95%, the highest mark she had ever given, and this served to inspire me further to develop my own practice and that of others. This tutor, Rebecca Clare, was passionate about education and a fount of knowledge; I felt very privileged to have been taught by her and she certainly motivated me to want to do even more.

The opportunity to begin to teach on the teacher education programme was offered to me during a regular meeting with my line manager, who was the head of Initial Teacher Education at the time. I had never mentioned wanting to teach on the programme but instead **it was suggested to me as my next step**. This encouraged me even further as I had been recognised as having the skills needed to develop the next generation of teachers in the sector.

As my degree came to a close another position of Teaching Excellence Hub Manager became available and I applied for it as this would be perfect alongside my new role as a teacher educator, which would begin in September 2014. Thankfully I was successful and although I had a big learning curve ahead of me it was a challenge I was ready to take on. There was much to learn as I was teaching a new subject, at a higher level, along with a new management role. On reflection, it was a lot to take on all at once but I was determined and relished the opportunity to carry on learning.

To deliver the modules I was re-engaging with pedagogical theories and feeling more able to analyse these and critique them in ways I had felt less inclined to do in my early teaching years. Both then and now I question whether we can teach someone how to teach, or is it an innate skill akin to the art of being a good communicator? Are we simply equipping natural teachers with the tools and strategies they need to teach successfully in line with what government agenda deems the best way? **I want new teachers to see that I am still excited and motivated to learn.** The desire to go on learning is of the greatest importance, according to Dewey, and nowhere can this be more important than in teacher education.

***Postscript*** *Since Gail wrote her profile, she has left Nelson and Colne College and is Head of Teaching and Learning at Myerscough College, near Preston.*