



## Sally Brown: an unlikely teacher educator

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My parents were told categorically that I would never be able to contemplate a career which involved standing up and talking in front of anyone, I was painfully shy at school, and **the last thing I imagined was that I would become a teacher**. As such I chose to become a psychiatric nurse and, once qualified, had a variety of different roles within the NHS supporting people with mental illness. It was only as I started to mentor student nurses on placement that I experienced the joy of facilitating learning, and, in 1993 I embarked on my first teaching qualification through City and Guilds; the Further and Adult Education Teachers' Certificate. I was confident in my own subject knowledge, but not in my ability to teach. My confidence grew, and when my daughter started attending the local pre-school, I was asked to help out on the parent rota. I subsequently joined

the Committee and helped secure funding for a course designed to equip new parents to consider a career in childcare. The only problem was that there was no tutor for the course, and as the only one with a teaching qualification, I soon found myself working as a sessional tutor and subsequently a Regional Training Officer, a full-time post with the Pre-school Learning Alliance. One of my responsibilities was to recruit new tutors, and as the sector changed in response to the introduction of the 2007 regulations, I found myself undertaking an in-service Postgraduate Certificate in Education at Wakefield College.

Linda Hallwood was my tutor, and the Centre Manager at Wakefield. I found her to be inspirational and motivating, she was passionate about the role of an FE teacher, and at my final tutorial asked me what I hoped to do at the end of the course. My answer was 'I would love your job, and to inspire other teachers in the same way you inspired me!' The introduction of the 2007 standards caused a surge in recruitment of new teachers to the sector and when, subsequently, some temporary hours became available within the teacher education team at Wakefield Linda encouraged me to apply. A month after starting this work I was offered a full-time post, and a year later Linda chose to reduce her hours. I applied for the Centre Manager post and succeeded her in 2009, a post I still hold today.

**I am passionate about the pivotal role that teachers within the sector play.** Despite my then shyness I had thoroughly enjoyed my time at school and I have studied almost continually ever since. However, this is not always the case for those accessing education and the support of a good teacher can have a significant impact in terms of engaging and inspiring adult learners. This was emphasised when one of my learners, who would go on to successfully complete a Level 3 teaching qualification, was so nervous before his micro-teach to the

rest of his peers that he was physically ill. Notwithstanding this he went on to secure volunteer teaching hours in September the same year and embarked on the in-service Certificate in Education. Throughout his two years on the course, he grew both in terms of confidence and academic ability, and by the end of the second year, not only had he justifiably been given an outstanding grade across all four areas but had secured a paid teaching position in a further education college. He graduated at the age of 55 having left school with no qualifications and having been told by his teachers that he would ‘never amount to anything’.

I completed my doctoral research in 2018; my thesis was entitled ‘What does professionalism mean to teachers within further education?’ This study seeks to understand the concept of professionalism in relation to trainee teachers currently undertaking initial teacher training within further education. This was prompted by the de-regulation of ITE across the sector following on from the Lingfield Report in 2012, which, coupled with the significant increase in tuition fees, has seen a decline in the number of trainees. A key driver in my choice of research topic and interest stemmed very much from the following quote from Robson (2006) ‘The assumption has been...that if I know my subject, I can, by definition, teach it to others’. That certainly was not my experience when I started teaching student nurses, undertaking ITE equipped me with the skills and knowledge to teach others, and I am heartened that, despite the ever-changing landscape in further education, there are still many who are committed to professionalism and ITE.