



Adam Hewitt: from punching numbers to pedagogy

The Manchester College

I have always been incredibly indecisive and when I was young I had many career aspirations, including author, teacher, and marketing manager, but I was very undecided until I reached my mid-twenties. When I left university I was still unclear on a career path. I wanted to teach but knew I did not want to work in the primary or secondary sector, so after completing an undergraduate degree in English Language and Linguistics at Sheffield University I trained to be a management accountant instead.

With forty years of endless spreadsheets looming I heard by chance in 2004 about a course at Bolton Institute of Higher Education (now the University of Bolton) to become a literacy subject specialist

and train to teach in further education, a sector with which I was unfamiliar, so I gave up my career and studied a one-year full-time programme. It was this journey with Bolton that led me in to being a teacher and teacher educator, and **I knew on the first day of my teacher training that my ultimate goal was to be a teacher educator** because I felt very connected to the content and was keen to support new teachers in the way I was being supported.

By 2009 I was managing a curriculum area at Hopwood Hall College in Rochdale when Gill Waugh, my former tutor, and Head of Initial Teacher Education at the University of Bolton, asked if I would like to deliver a continuous professional development module on behalf of the University. I jumped at the chance and taught there one evening a week on top of my full-time role at the College. Later that year a member of staff at the University of Bolton was going on maternity leave and I successfully applied for their job, which I took on secondment for twelve months. Twelve months lead to two years, and then to some part-time work with the University and various other universities around teacher education and English, and these opportunities were significant in my journey towards working full-time in teacher education.

Two people stand out as being influential in my journey to where I am today. Gill Waugh gave me my initial opportunity to work in teacher education and it is unlikely I would be where I am today without this chance. I still see elements of her teaching in my teaching and I learnt some valuable lessons from her about what it means to be a teacher educator. Ela Owen was my manager when I worked in a college in Oxfordshire, and she showed me that teacher education should be much more than a script or an assignment, as well as the

importance of reflection and conversations with trainee teachers to bring out the best in their practice.

In my first few years as a teacher educator I felt very reliant on other people to support my development. It was a very steep learning curve and I would spend hours looking at other people's materials to ensure that I understood them and that I could deliver them with confidence. I felt like I was treading water a lot of the time but reflecting on the experience now it has made me more resilient when delivering courses in what is a fast changing and developing environment.

As my career has developed I have become much more interested in and focused on doing my own research and preparation for sessions and on ensuring that I am working towards supporting trainees to be great teachers, not just to meet criteria set out in a handbook. The conversations I have with colleagues in my current role have been invaluable, and **I have found that informal discussions in the staffroom are now where most of my personal learning and development takes place.**

I have always felt too busy to pursue further study (I was going to complete an MA full-time in 2005 but decided against it because of work) but I subsequently enrolled on an MA in Education and I am now working towards achieving this goal. The MA is proving beneficial for both me and my students. For example, it has allowed me to reflect on how students' own lived experiences translate in to their professional practice, and how students can use this to challenge their own ideas about teaching and learning.