



John Matthews: it was a long haul to teacher educator

Hull College (retired)

Developing into a teacher educator seems to have been a theme for most of my working life. It all started in industry in my early twenties. Having completed a recognised apprenticeship in mechanical engineering in 1968, I progressed to being a draughtsman at a company that made glass containers in Doncaster. It was here that I got my

first experience of speaking to groups about the role of engineering design and its contribution to the production processes. This was quite a daunting task for a 23-year old but I enjoyed it. Therefore, when an opportunity presented itself to go into training full-time I did not need to think too hard about it and I became an Instructional Officer in what was then called a 'Government Training Centre'.

During my early years as a trainer I also managed to secure part-time teaching jobs in what was then Hull College of Higher Education and at the then Hull Technical College. Moving to a full-time appointment in a college was at that stage an ambition but I did not have the necessary qualifications for a full-time post. This all changed when in the early eighties the then Conservative Government, concerned by the rising numbers of unemployed school leavers, introduced The Youth Training scheme (YTS). To be involved in this new area of work colleges changed their academic requirements for lecturing staff and I was successful in securing a post at Hull College of Further Education. I like to think that my reputation as a part-time teacher was also an influencing factor. The College required me to complete 'The City and Guilds Further and Adult Education Teachers Certificate' course and this gave me my first insight into teacher education as well as giving me the ambition to become a teacher educator. The first two years of lecturing were tough. The students were mostly unmotivated and in this difficult context my part-time Certificate in Education course at Huddersfield Polytechnic did little to inspire me or raise my spirits.

Probably the greatest influence in becoming a teacher educator was when a colleague, who I had a lot of respect for, and who was influential in the College, suggested I seek some work with the adult training team. Thus, I joined a team of four lecturers who were expected

to deliver teaching and training skills, mainly to people in industry who were involved in the increasing number of YTS courses. This move was a breath of fresh air. I was constantly being told that I was good at it and better than that I was enjoying it. There were two other significant events over the next few years. First in 1988, I took my first steps into teacher education when The City and Guilds 7307 was transferred from what was then Hull College of Higher Education to the teacher education team at Hull College. Second, in 1993 the Hull College entered a franchise agreement to deliver the University of Huddersfield's Certificate in Education and PGCE.

I was appointed to the position of Centre Manager for the Huddersfield provision because of my role in setting it up at the College and, as most of the students embarking on Cert Ed/PGCE were College staff, **it quickly dawned on me how high profile I had become within the College.** Staff attending the courses had high expectations of the teacher educators and any criticisms would flow in my direction. There were two things which I feel were important to us as the teacher education team established its reputation. First, the curriculum model recognised and placed great value on meeting the particular development needs of each trainee. Second, through my 13 years as Centre Manager I worked with very talented and dedicated teacher educators who were role models for the trainees. Both were important when, in 2001, the then Labour Government introduced a requirement for all FE teachers and trainers to have at least a level 5 teaching qualification (this requirement would be removed by the Coalition Government in 2013). Labour's initiative meant that in 2001 staff who had been teaching in colleges for many years, but had not yet gained a teaching qualification, had to enrol on the CertEd or PGCE – and some, it must be acknowledged, did this with a measure of reluctance.

I have now been retired over 10 years, but I maintain an interest in teacher education and I regularly meet with former colleagues who keep me up-to-date. The end of the requirement for teachers and trainers to have at least a level 5 teaching qualification seems to be a short-sighted approach, probably influenced more by cost cutting than anything else. During my time as a teacher educator I saw standards rise as more people enhanced their teaching skills and knowledge through the courses they attended. **Hopefully, the policy makers will once again recognise the fundamental importance of teacher education** and its role in preparing and developing the sector's most valuable asset.