



Rachel Terry: still becoming a teacher educator

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In one sense, I became a teacher educator in 2006 when I gained a role within the teacher education team at my college, delivering sessions on the Minimum Core to Cert Ed/PGCE cohorts and training support tutors in literacy skills. My past experience as a modern linguist and ESOL teacher probably got me the job. In another sense, however, **I am still becoming a teacher educator**, aware that it is not a clearly marked transition, but a journey plagued by feelings of impostership and doubt.

The first lesson I taught on the Cert Ed/PGCE ended in a round of applause, perhaps triggered by the trainees' recognition that I had just pulled off a significant survival feat. I felt intensely aware of my lack of theoretical knowledge, my own PGCE in secondary education

having taught me approaches to teaching languages, without touching on many of the theorists that dominate other teacher education curricula. I could almost feel these theorists hovering disapprovingly at my back. From regarding myself broadly as an effective ESOL teacher, I now felt as if I was a beginner again, using session plans that had been created by my predecessor and struggling to find my own voice.

A key turning point was a *Train the Trainers* course for literacy and ESOL teacher educators (or trainers) in 2009. Here I was able to engage with theory as a living element of practice, as well as filling in some gaps under the pretext of ‘revision’. We considered explicitly the characteristics of teacher educators as opposed to teachers, the first time that I had been encouraged to recognise the difference. Teacher educators were marked by the need to be ‘emotionally robust’, strong enough to subject their own practice to scrutiny by themselves and others, and, indeed, to use this as a teaching resource. Somehow this helped me to appreciate that it would never be easy but that my own learning as a teacher was potentially more valuable than my (still lacking) ‘expert’ knowledge. As I went on to teach a BA Education for the first time and then to start my own EdD, **reading and learning became a part of my everyday practice**, I was also subtly influenced by each of the other members of the teacher education team at Calderdale College, learning from the different ways in which they carried out the role and interacted with students. By the time Debs Philip left the College in February 2014, I felt equipped to step into her shoes as Centre Manager, even if I made the shape and style of those shoes very much my own.

But a deeper sense of fraudulence still lurks somewhere beneath. Becoming a ‘teacher educator’ implies that you once became a teacher,

in my case, immediately after my degree, unsure what to do with my life and feeling that a PGCE would at least appear purposeful. Although I successfully passed the course, I was not yet emotionally equipped to deal with the school environment and, after a short spell of fairly disastrous supply teaching, opted out. When I opted back in in 2002, this time teaching ESOL in an FE college, I was surprised to find that I could teach and that I could even deem myself a ‘good’ teacher. I now realise how loaded a term this is, drawn back repeatedly to Moore’s (2004) excellent study of ‘dominant discourses’ in teaching and teacher education. Rather than essentialising the properties of a ‘good’ teacher (or teacher educator) he advocates the ‘reflexive turn’, which offers ‘the best hope, however uncomfortable [...] of long-term professional happiness and improvement of classroom practice’ (p.141). I have since introduced this to my trainees, to encourage them to recognise that good teachers come in many different forms and are unlikely ever to be the ‘finished product’.

The same applies, of course, to me as a teacher educator. The journey continues, but it is now slightly more comfortable and significantly more self-aware.

***Postscript:** Since Rachel wrote this profile, she has left Calderdale College and joined the University of Huddersfield as a senior lecturer in teacher education. In addition, she has successfully completed her doctorate.*