

## **Becoming a Secondary Mathematics Education Tutor**

I came late to school-teaching. My career had evolved through several mutations that had involved aspects of teaching and mentoring but not PGCE. I had tried teaching both abroad and in the UK for several years in both Primary and Secondary Schools but without formal teaching qualifications. So as a middle-aged enthusiast with a background in mathematics, psychology and industry I re-qualified as a Secondary Mathematics Teacher. The natural progression, for me, after some experience, was to build on that by starting a part-time PhD. From there I was drawn into ITE, initially as a Professional Studies Tutor and then into PGCE Secondary Mathematics tutoring.

I was fortunate in that I joined a course with a good framework based on a well-established model. The content, materials, procedures and partnerships had been in place for many years and slotting into the system looked straightforward. In many respects it was and I had help and support from colleagues. However, establishing myself as a presence and taking on the mantle of a course tutor with students from a variety of backgrounds and an age range spanning 30 years was another issue.

I felt vulnerable in the sense of lacking background knowledge of the foundation research that underpins working with student teachers. As compensation I had a background in psychology and, as had proved valuable in the past, my prop was to be an immense amount of reading. All available spare time (and there was not much of that left over after the demands on my time in the role of tutor) was spent scouring library shelves and exploring the internet to source my insatiable need to support my knowledge base. In parallel with increasing that background knowledge I needed to hone my skills of working with student teachers, HEI tutors and school based tutors (somewhat different from icy businessmen or school pupils). I found my HEI colleagues to be cooperative and supportive, they allowed me to sit in on their sessions and observe their craft and then patiently discussed with me why they did what they did. At the same time, I was running sessions and tutoring students on a very steep learning-curve. Sometimes I'm sure I could feel my brain overheating as I tried to catch up with other well-established colleagues who had had a lifetime of reading and learning and experience in advance of me.

I was fortunate, in that my various and previous careers had equipped me in many ways for a role in research and HEI teaching. However, my comfort level in the classroom comes from an avaricious approach to reading and keeping up to date with the research, listening to colleagues and student teachers and realising that even at my stately age I still have a lot to learn from them. My thanks to them all!