

# Chapter 9

## Chapter Outline

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# Chapter 9

## Key points

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- Every placement you undertake will contribute to your development; personal, academic and professional.
- Taking time to review the placement and to consider what you have learned from it, will help to focus on your future development.
- Consider the impact that the placement has had on you as a person, as well as you as a teacher.
- Consider how your experiences have enhanced and contributed to your practice, educational beliefs and pedagogy.
- The placement may have been a life enhancing or even a life changing one; share this with others and inspire them to follow your lead.

# Chapter 9

## Case Study

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### Case Study: Johanna – Study Centre

My main focus was Forest Schools as I am interested in creative teaching and learning. When observing Forest School practitioners the focus was child led free play. Children developed socially and emotionally, physically, increased self awareness, independence, developed a positive attitude and increased self esteem and confidence.

I was amazed how much learning had taken place when children were offered a positive outdoor learning experience. The children learnt so much from the sessions and I was surprised how the activities naturally made links to elements of the National Curriculum. The groups' sizes were between 8 and 12, and I was able to build amazing relationships with the children, as the activities were based on developing new skills and risk management.

I assisted and participated in many activities including, rock climbing, high ropes and rope swinging, archery, survival skills, build a camp fire, shelter building, mini-beat hunting, nature numeracy, nature music and environmental art. The placement was great and I have gained a real insight on how to deliver both Outdoor Learning and Forest School. Since the placement, I have worked with many Forest School practitioners and have delivered many outdoor learning activities in several schools. I have created a Forest School area in two schools and am hoping to achieve a Forest Schools level 3 practitioners award, which will lead me to Forest Schools Level 4 Training. This will enable me to train other teachers and people who are interested in delivering a Forest School programme.

Consider:

- Can you identify skills and understanding that Johanna developed as a result of her placement?
- How could a Forest School approach be adapted for a traditional setting?

## Case Study: Rachel – Gambia

The Department of State for Education in the Gambia (2006) is striving to improve education and note that teachers know that quality education is the key to the development in the Gambia. My time in Gambia was a wonderful learning experience and a beneficial adventure. It confirmed my belief in the importance of a safe, secure and positive learning environment and the impact that this has on the child's attitude and ability to learn. It also consolidated my previous learning and added to my professional development by demonstrating to me how important it is to have adequate resources, carefully differentiated in order to engage and stimulate the children, so that they are fully involved in their learning. It has shown me the value of a positive, comfortable and efficient classroom environment; an area where children are happy and eager to learn.

The English schools I have experience of are very well resourced in comparison to the schools we visited in the Gambia. We need to use these resources effectively to give all the children the best opportunities to learn. Differentiation is essential for the success of each child. We should set work according to the needs of the class; target individuals who are underachieving, encourage and motivate the class to make sure they achieve to the best of their ability.

My placement in the Gambia made me realise that the English educational system is effective and well resourced; and that we have many facilities to offer our children. It made me want to strive to be a better teacher and to provide for our children in a way that cannot be so readily provided in other countries.

When you review your placement, consider the following questions:

- Which elements do you consider significant in the development of an effective learning environment?
- Were these elements present in your placement?
- If some of these elements were not present how you did overcome this, to try to create a good learning environment?
- How could you use this experience to impact on your professional development?

## Case Study: Carolyn – Art Gallery

This placement linked directly to the following TDA (2008) QTS Standards:

- Q30: Identify opportunities for learners to learn in out-of-school contexts
- Q32: Identify opportunities for working with colleagues, sharing the development of effective practice with them
- Q25a: Use a range of teaching strategies and resources

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But I am sure I met many more during my time at the gallery. It turned out to be one of my most successful placements although it wasn't assessed by the University. The reason it was successful is that in those three weeks my views on what constitutes good practice in teaching were overturned. Teaching in an art gallery taught me that good pedagogy extends far beyond the walls of a classroom. DfES (2003) The Excellence and Enjoyment Strategy stated that children learn better when they are excited and engaged. I concur completely and believe that at the heart of good pedagogy is the drive to creatively engage children in subject matter and exploit cross-curricular links in a way that makes learning meaningful.

I have seen first hand that a sure-fire way to get children excited and engaged is to take them out of the traditional school setting and provide them with opportunities to see and experience the stimuli provided by alternative learning environments. I would recommend that every student teacher complete a placement in an alternative setting because it really does open your eyes to a whole host of learning possibilities within contexts that you may never have thought about before.

Now it's easier than ever to set up a placement like this, with websites such as <http://teachingoutsidetheclassroom.com/> which is supported by Creative Partnerships, CapeUK, Learning outside the classroom manifesto, Museums, libraries and archives council (MLA) and the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). This website allows students on initial teacher training to locate and set up placements in a plethora of non-school settings. I have high hopes that, like me, many student teachers will take the opportunity to teach in an alternative setting and boost future creativity in the teaching profession.

## **Case Study: Gemma – Gambia**

Gemma, and her colleagues who undertook a placement in a school in the Gambia, was given the opportunity to be creative, and to share her knowledge, understanding and skills with the teachers in the school.

One of the achievements from the placement was the creation of a 'Resource Room', where the children could go to be creative. The children had access to paper, pens, crayons and pencils and we encouraged them to be creative through art activities and to produce displays for their classrooms. We also developed some drama based activities, including role play and hot seating, which the children had not done before.

Teaching in the Gambia was the most amazing thing I have ever done. It helped me develop as a person and to appreciate what I have in life and how lucky I am. It also helped me develop as a teacher. I was able to share the strategies and

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techniques that I used, with the teachers in the school, and their lessons became more active and creative. The teachers also began to use different questioning techniques, and discussion, and started to encourage the children to be more involved in their learning.

Consider:

- Why was it useful for Gemma to share her knowledge, understanding and skills with the teachers in the school?
- How could she continue to share her knowledge, understanding and skills with teachers during a traditional placement?

### **Case Study: Jennifer – Farm**

I enjoyed every single part of the experience, even the messy parts like cleaning up the stables and pig sties, I can honestly say I have never felt more involved or as much a part of a team on any other placement. All the staff were brilliant, cared and gave us advice as needed. We also got advice from the teachers from things like how to get thirty odd children along a country road safely to handling confrontation (fights, etc).

I was very fortunate to have gone with two very good friends and I was able to see a different side to them, as we don't usually get the chance to observe and share tips with each other. Not only did I see a change within the children's attitude towards work, but I saw a massive change in confidence with my friends. I am more confident in working with animals, and with the situations that are involved with this (hygiene rules and where children would stand safe distance away, etc). I am more confident in speaking to adults and asking for help when necessary.

I have learnt so many things from the placement. There have been many situations that I have learnt from. For example, one child needed the toilet but because she couldn't take off her waterproof clothing in time she had an accident. I took control of the situation and spoke to the teacher with discretion and the teacher said I handled the situation really well. Another situation was when a boy with Aspergers syndrome became violent, we found that the teachers had been trained for this situation and handled it tremendously.

Reflect on the following:

- Consider two situations where you have worked as a member of a team, one that was a difficult experience, one that was a positive experience.
- Consider your role within the team in each situation. Do you think that your personality, temperament, prior experiences, beliefs, opinions and values had an impact on the role you played?
- How do you think others perceived your role and contribution?
- Are there any lessons that you can learn from positive situations that could be used in potentially difficult ones? Ask your friends and colleagues to comment, but don't be offended if they have suggestions to make!

### **Case Study: David – Japan**

For most of my placement in a Japanese Elementary School I assisted class teachers during lessons, although at times, to the amusement of the children, I would also join in as a learner. For example, when the second grade class which I spent most of my time in were beginning to learn 'shodo' (Japanese calligraphy), I would sit at a desk and learn it too. At all the junior and senior high schools I visited I gave a brief talk on English culture in several English classes. There would also be a question and answer section with the students for their speaking and listening skills. Students would record my answers and I would look at them after the lesson with the English teacher and provide some simple feedback. At the university lectures I attended I was there as a student so my role there was much the same as if I was attending a lecture in England. The exception being that I was often asked to explain things in more detail to the Japanese students by the professor.

The children at the elementary school seemed to be given enormous responsibility for themselves as well as others. The sense of community was evident at many different levels of the school, from class, to year group, to the whole school. One of my fondest memories is of the children lining up at the end of everyday in the playground, before they bowed in unison with the teachers and thanked them for the day's learning. The children then walked home in neighbourhood groups led by the oldest children. At first it all seemed alien to me but after returning to England I realised how important such small formalities were in establishing a sense of community for all involved.

Another common occurrence I witnessed through elementary schools to senior high was cleaning time. This happened for fifteen minutes after every lunch time. It involved the children and teachers cleaning the whole school. Classical music would be played through the loud speakers and children would spread around the school, sweeping floors, wiping desks, trimming bushes, weeding etc. . . . One teacher admitted it may not be the most effective method but it gave the children the responsibility of maintaining their school premises. I asked how everyone knew what to do, as the first few times I witnessed it seemed to work like clock work. I found out that each class was divided into smaller groups who followed a cleaning rota.

The most rewarding part of my time at the elementary school in Japan was similar to that of all of my previous placements, when the children take to you and accept you. This was something that usually came quite naturally when I had been on placement before and I'm happy to say it was the same in Japan, although the language barrier did mean that communication was much more 'fun'. It also reinforced the reason why I wanted to be a teacher and made me realise that the feeling and motivation I have experienced in England was not just in relation to England but anywhere when given the chance.

I believe that the placement gave me a real appreciation of the social skills children can develop, if encouraged to do so, in an appropriate and responsive manner. It made me question the incessant intervention that teachers can feel compelled to make in England. This is clearly something culturally bound and I am not suggesting that one system is superior to the other. However, when experiencing both, it made me able to recognise similarities, differences and basic realities of each system. This critical reflection was only enabled from the opportunity to step outside of my own culture and in doing so the constraints that come with it.

I began not knowing what to expect, and concluded the experience not knowing where to start to reflect, but without a doubt it has had a very positive influence on all aspects of my development and my role as a teacher. Experiencing the Japanese school system made me begin to appreciate other aspects of schooling that are just as, if not more, important than the academic side of school. For example, after school clubs played a very important part in all of the children's lives and lunchtimes were a class event, in the classroom, with the class teacher. Lunchtimes were when I got to know the children in my class best. I intend to take parts of the good practice I saw in Japan into my own classroom in England.



Part of being an effective teacher is to ensure that your knowledge and understanding is up to date, and that your academic development and expertise continues to grow. With this in mind, consider the following:

- Are there new skills, knowledge and understanding you would like to develop?
- How could you actively pursue the development of these?
- Are there language classes you could attend (possibly with Exchange students)?
- Are there extra curricular clubs you could become involved in, to enhance your skills, alongside the children's?
- Do you have a particular area/subject which concerns you – Art? Music? Science? Research this on the internet, read books, journals and articles. Discuss this with peers, colleagues and tutors. Keep a record of what you have done and the impact this has had.

### **Case Study: Adam – Spain**

The placement had a positive affect on my development academically and professionally, and enabled me to further meet some of the QTS standards. Professional development involves staying informed of new developments and technology within teaching, as well as learning new ideas and seeing new teaching styles, which can therefore improve subject knowledge and understanding which is essential in improving my own teaching. I was given the opportunity to work with many high attaining pupils, where I needed very secure subject knowledge and understanding because if I knew the subject well, I would be better equipped to teach the subject effectively.

The placement also gave me an opportunity to look at how the school taught ICT at Key Stage 2/3. Lesson observations allowed me to gather new ideas, teaching and behaviour management strategies. Supporting during lessons and collecting schemes of work used within the school provided me with the opportunity to learn more about lesson planning and gain homework ideas, which would be useful when teaching in England. This allowed me to add more variety and depth to my own teaching, while assisting pupils who were advancing quickly with their work. The placement allowed me to be selective and therefore, was sensitive to my personal development needs. I was able to choose lessons, and aspects of lessons, I felt would be most beneficial to my subject knowledge. Coupled with regular discussions, I was able to learn from teachers who had worked in an international environment for many years and were willing to share their knowledge and expertise.

The opportunity arose for me to teach Business Studies to year 13 pupils. This presented two potential issues. Firstly, Business Studies is a subject I had not taught previously and so had limited subject knowledge. Secondly, I had never taught a sixth form class. After discussion with the regular class teacher, and a look at the Business Studies National Curriculum, I was able to gain an idea of what I needed to focus on within the lesson. The class size was also very small which made overcoming the second issue a bit easier. With a good lesson planned, effective teaching activities, and a bit of confidence, I was able to deliver the lesson successfully, to a number of different groups, without any behaviour problems.

The school also held other regular meetings. The Department meetings I attended gave me an insight into the issues of teaching ICT in the school and the next steps the teachers were intending to take within their lessons specifically for each class. Another meeting I attended was a year 12 and 13 progress meeting. This involved all sixth form teachers getting together to discuss the current attainment and effort of each sixth form pupil. This was beneficial to me as it gave me an insight into the methods that the school was using to help and support those pupils who were struggling, and how the school dealt with the pupils whose behaviour has become a problem. This was something I had not witnessed during my placements in the England. This was possibly because not all schools have a sixth form and the ones that do have a larger number of pupils than at this school, but I felt it was a good idea, as pupils could be tracked personally and their educational needs catered for before their grades suffer too greatly.

As you review your academic and professional progress, it would be useful to consider the following questions:

- Could you undertake audits to get a baseline of your knowledge, understanding and skills in particular subjects/areas?
- Are there particular subjects/areas that need to be developed and 'targeted'?
- Are you able to set yourself some personal and professional targets?
- Can you keep a record of any reading, research, practice you have gained in this area, which has supported your development? Can you demonstrate this in practice?