

## Brian Coxs FE teacher of physics

A few years ago I was looking for a job in teaching, I had a PGCE specialising in further education, I had chosen English as a foreign language at university for the teaching experience but what is also true is that when you have a PGCE in further education you can teach anything you have at least a level 3 qualification in yourself, in this case I have a degree in business information technology but I also have a degree foundation in technology as a broader discipline. So being sick and tired of the ten-page application forms for ESOL positions with the requirement predominantly being for a CELTA (a one-month course in English teaching) but still getting nowhere I thought about my other options, and thinking of my level 4 in technology with the Open University, I applied for a job as a physics teacher. I was lucky enough to get the interview, the process was a three hour battery of tests including an aptitude test and panel interview, postgraduate education, which I had, enhanced criminal checks and occupational health screening and all for the princely sum of what you needed for a studio flat and a bicycle if you're lucky enough to be the chosen one.

In this case I was shown in by one of the interviewers, a man in his mid-thirties who was unshaven, he had on what looked like a Primark suit, all tight around the jacket and riding up the backside, also shoes that were severely worn down on the sides of the heels. He showed me to the computerised aptitude test which took about 45 minutes of physics that most people wouldn't understand at all but which I felt I did fairly well in and then it was the interview. There was the man and a female co-worker she did most of the talking, she said they was glad that I had come and that my test was okay, they wasn't sure about ESOL but they was interested in the physics as it was so difficult to get the staff these days, but they said that on this occasion my chances wasn't that good to be honest as they had a Brian Coxs coming for an interview later, not sure if I had hear of the gentleman but if he turned out to be any good he would get the job.

A week later I got a letter thanking me for crossing the country for the interview but as expected Mr Cox's had gotten the job, they said it wasn't so much the physics as we all know is always boring it was more the entertaining. He came with a bunch of flowers in his jacket, plastic red nose, a flower on his lapel that squirted water and a custard pie, we did laugh she said. So as I was saying she said it wasn't so much the physics which is always boring but what he did to make it more interesting.

I still haven't found a role and that's despite only 15% of FE teachers having a PGCE the year I graduated in 2003 and only 5% of the public being qualified to postgraduate level, plus of course enhanced criminal checks and occupational health screening, and to think that in that same year 78% of physics teacher in the A level sector didn't have a degree in physics and amazingly 30% didn't even have an A level in physics, but such has been what I have noticed in my efforts. I saw a news story once about a young man who left university with a degree and had applied for 500 jobs unsuccessfully in the last ten years, well the honest truth is I can say the same and you know what it's been painful and upsetting at the best of times. I'd have to say though that my teacher training was probably the best in the world but apart from stress, confusion, poverty and no ladder of any kind it's just a part of what makes me what I am today. As Marshall McLuhan put it 'we shape our tools and from then on our tools shape us' I'm not sure but in a way that's the way it should be, one thing's for sure you don't want to go getting high end tools and not use any of them, I think it's bad for your health.

Mark Benniman 06/20

'The Economist' magazine (19/04/2003:31) shows some alarming statistics for other post-16 sectors especially science. Teacher qualifications in the A-level sector, taking physics as an example the 'council for science and technology' states that 78% of those teaching do not have a degree in the subject (level 4-5) and astonishingly 30% do not have an A-level in the subject (level 3)

Mark was liked by his students and I always found him to be totally reliable and deeply committed to what ever he put his mind too. He entered fully into the work and activities of the Business Division and demonstrated a depth of character and a genuine love of teaching.

**It is worth noting that students who already hold Masters or even doctorate awards sometimes struggle with the very different nature of the PGCE at Masters level and therefore prior qualifications should not be seen as an indicator of success.**

**For many students, this will be the first time they have been required to think in the highly personal, reflective manner needed for becoming a reflective practitioner and the study skills required for this may be very different to those used in their first degree.**

**PGCE M Level  
Dr Keira Sewell**

