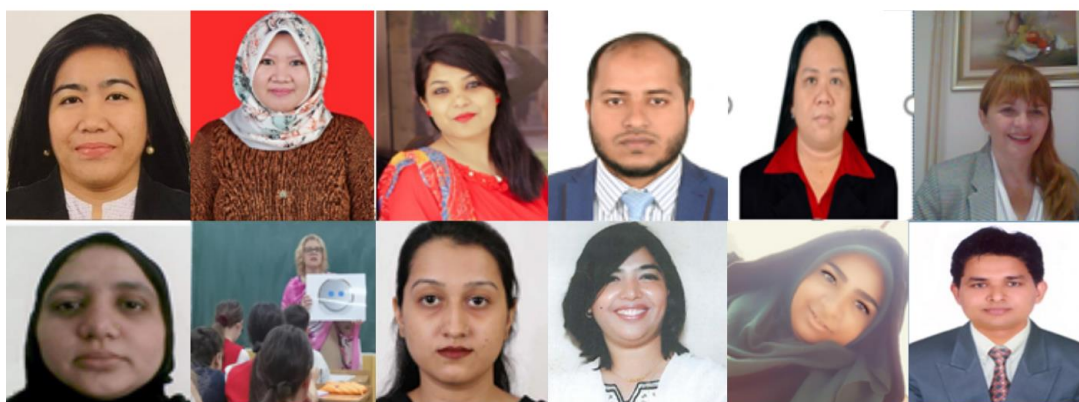




GLOBAL FORUM FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

MY TEACHING JOURNEY

Reflective Narratives



Editor: Dr. Munir Moosa

GLOBAL FORUM FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS (GFTE)



Transforming Lives through Sustainable Social Practices of Human Rights- Munir's Socioecoethical Model (MSEEM)

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Introduction to GFTE

“I do not consider teaching as a profession, rather a reflective journey that leads to optimism, improvement, selfless devotion, and life-long learning. Teachers are the symbol of altruism. Genuine teachers don’t contest for popularity or seek counterfeit affiliation, rather demonstrate realities. Their prime concern is not to pull someone's leg, rather explore teaching identity, and help others’ grow ethically and intellectually”
- Munir Moosa Sadruddin

GFTE was established in 2014 by Dr. Munir Moosa Sadruddin under Munir’s socioecoethical model of human rights education and Munir’s socioecoethical model of social work.

With virtual members from over sixty-five countries, GFTE reflects cultural diversity and pluralism. It is the world’s first sustainable virtual forum that promotes human rights awareness among children and women of marginalized communities at no cost. It also raises awareness among the children and youth regarding human values through extracurricular activities so they can embrace active citizenship, and play an integral part in resolving local and global issues. GFTE further delivers vocational, educational, and recreational training to visually impaired teachers, violence-affected youth and women, orphans, old age people, persons with disabilities, and children battling cancer at no cost. So far, we have educated more than 10,000 marginalized people.

Our sustainable model works in a dignified manner. We occasionally offer career and academic counseling and low-cost workshops, where, under our model of sustenance, we utilize proceedings for the management of GFTE and the welfare of deprived communities. For example, we have donated 12 sewing machines to widows; enrolled a child battling cancer for a beautician course; fulfilled a wish of a child battling cancer to become a published author; donated health kits to a rural community; gifted sports shoes among girls of a marginalized community; sponsored vocational and academic training of visually impaired youth; arranged few medical checkups for children with visual impairment; distributed food to needy people, cooked by persons with disabilities; organized dinners for people belonging to the marginalized communities; arranged more than 100 awareness sessions on pertinent topics like mensuration education, rape education, drug education, etc; delivered thousands of gifts to children battling cancer, visual impaired children, and street children; donated cash to the orphanage, cancer forums, and organizations

working for persons with disabilities; helped poor disabled men to start a toy business on street; established a toy room for visual impaired children, and the list goes on. We also thank all those schools, located in Pakistan, who always participate in our extracurricular activities for good cause.

GFTE entered the digital stream with full zeal in the year 2020. Through digital networking and communities of practices, by far, GFTE has successfully arranged free international webinars, three international conferences, a parenting conference, and a symposium for the teachers, educators, and parents. These also included human rights awareness sessions on childhood cancer, human rights education, and child abuse for wider communities. So far, we have educated more than half a million people across the globe.

GFTE has recently started an honorary membership campaign to recognize a few selective dedicated virtual members. The membership demands individuals to perform at least two social activities in a year, like teaching a girl child, spending quality time with people belonging to the marginalized community, or helping their community in any capacity. Upon completion of social tasks, members are expected to send us documentary evidence. In return, we have pledged to renew their certificate of membership. There is no cost to avail membership. We only need global mindedness, trust, goodwill, punctuality, active participation, and willingness to serve the global community.

Impressive Achievements

1. Conferred Honorary Professorships to two distinguished scholars
2. Recognized as Microsoft 2021-2022 Showcase School
3. Offered part-time employment to visually impaired talented young women
4. Published Open e-book of a child battling cancer
5. Published GFTE conference e-books
6. Presented policy paper in UNODC, 2021
7. Research collaboration with Turkish University, 2021
8. Represented GFTE in the GEI International Summer Conference on Education for Sustainable Peace, 2021

International Scholars Associated with GFTE



Welcome Note

This e-book is the compilation of the stories, shared by the selected participants during the GFTE 3rd International Conference, titled 'My Teaching Journey', 24-25 October 2021.

This conference was an intellectual gift for the GFTE virtual members of over 65 countries. It was organized at no cost to promote the culture of open education among global teachers and researchers. We received more than 350 entries, out of which, we selected the most competitive stories. Congratulations to all! We are also thankful to the following Keynote Speakers for gracing our conference:

Anna Malavisi- Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy & Humanistic Studies at Western Connecticut State University



Laurin Mayeno- Founder, Mayeno Consulting



Jennifer Hancock, Founder, Humanist Learning Systems



Vemel (Resh) Ramasamy, Australian College of Applied Psychology



Special thanks to Professor Vemel (Resh) Ramasamy for moderating the parallel session (stories).

We hope you will continue supporting our vision, and remain active on our Facebook forum.

Dr. Munir Moosa, Volunteer Director

<https://www.facebook.com/GlobalTeacherForum>

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3WILUdxSTpf_LvgPfzgj7A

STORY FROM THE MODERATOR OF THE PARALLEL SESSION VEMEL (RESH) RAMASAMY

Australian College of Applied Psychology

Distinguished Honorary Professor, GFTE



I currently work as a Level B lecturer at the Australian College of Applied Professions (ACAP). I have worked as an academic in the scope of a lecturer and tutor for over 6.5 years. I have taught within community services, leadership, psychology, disability studies, counseling, and social sciences at an undergraduate and postgraduate level. More recently, I have secured a teaching position with ACAP in the discipline of counseling. I am an active peer reviewer, published author and offer supervision to students undertaking research projects internationally. I provide tutoring supports to high school students specializing in Biology, Science, ESL, and Personal Learning Plan. I was also awarded the title of Distinguished Honorary Professor by the Global Forum for Teacher Educators for contributing to the field of human rights education.

I have always had a deep-seeded passion and devotion for education. I discern learning as a lifelong endeavor and commitment. Perhaps it's cultural, but within the Indian culture, we venerate education and our educators. From a young age, my mother inculcated the importance of education and has been instrumental in making me appreciate its worth. Education helps me make sense of the world. It also humbles me to remain curious and eager to discern things through diverse perspectives. I often find myself having to learn or relearn things. Whilst it can be challenging, I welcome and enjoy the experience immensely.

I feel god has placed me on this earth, granting me the ability to use my passion for a greater purpose, which is to aid in the creation of future learners/leaders. My personal life being autistic is influential in the sense, I am determined to show the world neurodivergent people are inherently gifted and can secure legitimate jobs or valued roles in society such as being a lecturer, a professor and/or a leader. I find myself actively disrupting and dismantling dated and dominant discourses through my involvement within academia to summon new/alternative hegemonies and to privilege the voices of the underprivileged. I see this as my life calling. I am also motivated by people in my close/intimate circle who share similar values to me. Firstly, my late grandmother Papa Nathan who always believed in me. Secondly, Cathy, Professor Tara, Associate Professor Di, Professor Margaret, Dr. Donna, Professor Munir, Lesley, Dr. Kate, and Gaby, a group of righteous beings who inspire me to stay true in what I believe in. This helps me to reach unthinkable and unrivaled heights.

Originating from Malaysia, I found education and teaching styles deployed in Australia to be a lot more inclusive, student-led, and fluid in nature. Unlike a dictatorship style of teaching and learning summoned in Malaysia, students in Australia from my knowledge and experience are encouraged to think outside the square, challenge dated notions and ways of thought, and engage in critical and reflexive thinking. Having completed most of my schooling and tertiary education in Australia, I found this way of teaching and learning liberating.

All I see surrounding me within academia is ‘entitlement’ and ‘privilege’ nested around a pervasive culture that validates and romanticizes dominant ways of embodiment and thought. There is a lack to no representation of colored, queer, and disabled people within higher education, especially in leadership. This polarity between normative and non-normative groups of people could benefit with some equalizing as a matter of priority.

I would like to share three challenges that I have faced as a lecturer:

1. Staff members who are not willing to embrace a team mentality can be challenging. This makes it difficult to establish mutuality, engage in reciprocal intellectual exchange and humanize what we do as a collective. Additionally, the prevalence of implicit ableism, queerphobia and racism adds to these compounding challenges.
2. Not all students benefit or are in favor of remote/distant learning. Many are still unfamiliar and need time to acclimatize themselves to this foreign environment. I found this to be prevalent among mature-aged students who might not be familiar with using a computer or Zoom and/or navigating the learning content and resources online. Internet connectivity and having reliable and compatible devices to attend the lectures/tutorials are also widely reported issues amongst students. Disabled students also find online learning, not the most user-friendly and accommodating to their learning styles and needs. All of these factors undoubtedly disadvantage students creating unnecessary disruption and angst in an already turbulent and ever-changing environment. This can make it challenging for me to be able to deploy equitable and inclusive learning and teaching experience due to variations in student learning styles.
3. I experience autistic burnout, an intense debilitating mental, emotional, and/or physical exhaustion sporadically. This often translates and manifests itself into accentuated anxiety, speech disfluency, or selective mutism and feeling paralyzed to the point of experiencing dorsal vagal shutdown. For example, the autistic brain yearns for structure, predictability, and routine. When my routine is disrupted unexpectedly, it can impact me adversely as it takes my brain some time to process, meditate and plan for the change. But thankfully, I can talk about some of these challenges candidly with my managers and colleagues who are supportive and accommodating of my needs. For example, in an upcoming webinar, my manager approved for me to pre-record my talk which not only helps me to be prepared in advance and have control, but it also enables me to direct my energies on responding to live questions on the day without feeling sensorily overwhelmed.

I have used the following unique strategies to overcome challenges in teaching

1. I remind myself daily that I am working with human subjects and not objects. This helps me to consciously humanize what I do in the way I interact and communicate with staff and students.
2. I take time to listen and personalize what I do with my students and staff to summon an emancipatory effect. Rather than attribute people as coequal and as a monolith, I privilege non-normative, subjugated, and alternative discourses. Whilst we might have some shared experiences, I need to discern a person’s intersectional differences and cater to them in a meaningful way, enabling and person-centered. I found referring to the theoretical tenets of intersectionality and narrative inquiry helpful in gaining deeper nuanced insights about people’s intricate and complex lives.

3. Learning should be fun and user-led. As a therapist myself, I am in favor of ‘play-based, ‘person-centered, ‘errorless’, ‘inclusive’, ‘reflexive’, and ‘experiential’ learning modalities. I am also inspired by the central tenets of an authentic, servant, and transformative leadership styles which guide and inform my teaching orchestrations. Given I uphold several minority statuses, I have firsthand experiences on what it feels like to be patronized, infantilized, and denigrated as a former/current student and staff. Therefore, when engaging with my students especially, respect and compassion are at the center of what I do. My duty as a lecturer is to help students appreciate their innate potentialities, shepherding them to believe with the right mindset and approach, anything is possible.

We must engage in ongoing learning and development. A qualification acquired 20 or 10 years ago is invalid. What you may have learned 10 or even 5 years ago may have no relevance in your current life. Education and learning are not static or linear. Things change. Systems change. Processes change. Knowledge evolves. This has led me to pursue additional studies and something I will be doing for the rest of my life. I am currently pursuing a second Master of Leadership at Deakin University in conjunction with a Doctor of Philosophy at Flinders University.

I would like to improve on my research output. A good teacher is also a good researcher. I value research dissemination immensely but having to find time amid my work commitments is arduous. I currently have 6 manuscripts pending. I plan on devoting time during my work break to submit these manuscripts to a preferred journal.

My message to the global community is ‘To be an educator is a gift. Acknowledge that. Not many are afforded this privilege. Make use of your gift and privilege by being of service to your students. Always do what is right by them and for them’.

MARIJA HALAČEK, CROATIA

Teacher Adviser, Professor of Croatian Language and Literature

Osnovna Škola Molve, Primary School Molve



I am a teacher of Croatian language and literature in a small primary school. I teach children between the ages of 10 to 14. The school is located in a rural area and has only about two hundred students. I have been working for 25 years. I progressed in the profession: first I acquired the title of teacher mentor, and then teacher advisor. I have been awarded, but I am most pleased with the success of my students in various competitions. I encourage students to love their language, culture, and customs and to get to know the world around them, and respect differences. My students participate in Erasmus + projects, learn how to write songs and stories, compete in language skills, volunteer, and participate in workshops.

I love my profession because it makes me a complete person. I don't see school as a job, but as a place where I want to be. In school, I feel safe, happy, and satisfied. In class, I monitor the progress of my students and learn from them. Isn't that love?

I grew up in a humble family. My parents completed only three grades of elementary school. They were farmers and considered schooling only an obligation at the lowest level. But my father read a lot and there were always a lot of books in the house. That modesty in which I grew up did not allow me to have everything my friends had, but it directed me towards reading in which I found everything I could not in everyday life: by reading a book I could be a princess, I could travel, I explored universe.... The book was in my hand every day and already in elementary school, I knew I wanted to become a teacher. Along the way, I constantly encountered obstacles. When I was supposed to enroll in high school, my parents didn't let me go until they were persuaded by my teachers. And then they conditioned me that it had to be a four-year vocational school and that after that I had to go home, get a job and help out on the farm. However, even in high school, I continued to study diligently and my desire to become a teacher of Croatian language and literature grew more and more. My parents resisted again, they were afraid of how I would manage in the capital and whether I would just have fun and not learn. At the urging of my high school teachers, my parents still let me take the entrance exam. Ten years later, they admitted to me that they had prayed that I would not pass the entrance exam, that I would not be able to enroll, that I would be at home with them and not go to college. After I graduated, they were the proudest parents in the world. Today I give my example to my students. They are amazed because many do not want to learn. Those who want to, can't believe that parents are forbidding going to school. It was the obstacles that motivated me not to give up and to fulfill my dream - to be a teacher.

The good thing about education in my country

The Croatian education system has its good sides. Proof of this is the successes of our students in world competitions, especially in Computer Science and Science subjects. Students have organized transportation to schools and at least one hot meal. For several years now, the state has been providing free textbooks to all primary school students. Teacher professional development and formative evaluation are increasingly encouraged as part of the teaching process, although the emphasis is still on final assessment (summative evaluation). I notice a greater interest in

vocational occupations and the STEM field. In addition to the subjects, the curriculum also plans cross-curricular topics such as entrepreneurship, personal development, and civic education. More and more schools receive European Union funds and have added value to education through successful projects.

Educational challenges in my country

As in every country, in Croatia, I recognize some problems in education. Here are some:

We are trying to implement education reform, but it is going slowly and inefficiently. The elementary school still lasts 8 years, after which many students have to decide whether to continue their general education in the gymnasium or choose a vocational school. At the age of 14, this is difficult for students. During secondary education, a large number of subjects that students need to study that are not related to the profession they have chosen remain a problem. After four years of high school education, everyone can take the state matura exam, and it is adjusted only to the gymnasium's program, so it is difficult for vocational school students to take that exam. In smaller communities, the number of children in schools is declining, and in cities, it is increasing, so they do not have enough classrooms to work in one shift. Students enroll in high schools and colleges mostly based on final grades, without insight into their abilities. Teachers do not have the appropriate status in society as they deserve, so protests are organized.

Challenges faced by me as a teacher

I point out my ignorance of the English I need every day, and I haven't had a chance to learn it during my education or the money later to pay for courses. I learned it myself working on European projects, in communication with partners.

The next challenge for me was how to get students with attention deficit disorder to work and learn. We don't have a psychologist at school so I find ways to work with students who may have needed to be in an institution rather than a regular school.

My daily challenge is also the one that struggles within me: how to reconcile the two sides, the professional, which is full of knowledge, and the one in practice, with the students to whom I constantly adapt to achieve good results.

Unique strategies I have used to overcome the challenges in teaching

I recorded video lessons for my students and the Croatian Ministry of Education during the pandemic of coronavirus. That was good practice to overcome problems in long-distance learning. To make good use of English in speech and writing, I started writing Erasmus + projects 8 years ago. In this way, I finally got the opportunity to travel, which I have always wanted, but also to learn English and other languages. By staying with students for a week on mobility, we develop our language skills together. In addition, participating in projects allows students to fly a plane for the first time, get to know a new culture, people, and customs... In short, I want to provide them with what their parents cannot. Just like mine couldn't. In working with students with attention deficit disorder, I design activities that often alternate during class. I organize volunteer work in which students leave the school space so that they feel useful and successful, and physical work in helping others makes them happy.

I lead a team of 50 teachers and in working with them I try to get answers to questions that bother me in my daily work at school.

Things to improve in my teaching practice

I would like to improve the accessibility of cultural events to my students. Namely, due to the distance from the city, students very rarely go to concerts, to the cinema, to the theater. I also need to improve the models of student motivation for regular performance of set tasks and set education as a top priority.

Message

Education should be available to everyone, regardless of money, status in society, the distance of schools from larger cities.

With their examples of problem-solving approaches, attitudes towards students and their parents, colleagues at work, rights, and responsibilities, teachers are a model that their students will follow. So, let's be a good model, a good example through the eyes of thousands of students who follow us closely!



MELISSA PAJAYON RAMIREZ, PHILIPPINES

Teacher II

Tabangao Integrated School (Department Of Education)



I began my teaching career way back in 2003, right after I passed my Licensure Examination for Teachers. It was a rocky road since I had to look for the opportunity in the capital city of my country, Manila. I was at first devastated by the reality. I was rejected several times by numerous schools for they are looking for well-experienced teachers. As a newly graduated, not to mention that I was a fresh passer, I had no experience in teaching yet. I decided my luck in an International school and after several weeks, I was hired as English Teacher at Korean Institute. From 2009-2016, I was teaching as a College Professor, and from 2017 to the present, I am connected in the public school while taking my Doctor of Philosophy Class.

My profession is the noblest form all the professions in the world. Nothing can be compared to the dedication, passion, and love that a teacher can show in teaching. I love the way I cater to students and teach them the knowledge they deserve. Thinking that students may learn from me, it is all that matters when you are in the teaching field. The Philippines is a developing country. Many parts of our nation consist of youths who are aiming high and are clinging to the best education they could have. This profession of mine will bring hope to different students with different goals and aspirations. I am only one of the ways students can hold on to the promises that one day, they will be as successful as I am today. I love my profession because I know I can make a difference, and many have been called for this but I am one of the few that has been chosen to shape the minds of our youths today. The opportunity which was given to me 19 years ago did not go to waste. I nurture students the best I could holding the belief that one day if I cross paths with them, they will remember me for my good deeds. That they will smile at me and tell me they are all successful in their chosen careers.

I will be honest that this profession was not my first choice. Since our family cannot afford the tuition fee for the career I wanted, I had no choice but to enroll in a Secondary Education Major in English because the tuition fee was lower compared to other courses. During the first phase of my college days, I found myself having trouble with my major for I feel bored studying the English Language until another qualifying exam was taken during my second year. I've realized I need to focus so that my current year shouldn't be wasted. I remember myself studying that hard during my third year and got 98% in my final demonstration teaching during my final year. What motivated me that time was the thinking that one day, I will be able to reach the peak of my chosen career through giving off the best teaching I could share with my future students. Our family status made me stronger since our business was down due to financial constraints. I need to focus on different elements like; the beauty of teaching, the experience that teaching may give me, the smiles of the students while learning from me in the future, and the family status I need to uplift for our future. Nothing is more important after all than the reality that teaching is one of the hardest yet fulfilling careers a professional could ever have. Motivations are those factors and elements that could help build confidence for whatever you do and it is always you that will decide what

future you wanted to land on. Joining the teaching profession was the most exciting, blissful, and answered prayer of my life.

The good thing about education in my country

One of the good things in education here in our country is the ability of the students to still study despite the obstacles and problems. Students are having the drive to strive more for their future. The government on the other hand is looking for ways on how to improve the system of education in our country. In 2016, the K-12 form of education started wherein, the former grades 1-10 attendance in school became Kinder to Grade 12. The system was a noise at first because 95% of the parents were questioning the new setup of the education. It was a hard step for the government. Nowadays, people of the Philippines have started adapting the system and embracing the new setup of education. Those students who graduated in 2018 grabbed the opportunity to work earlier and some attended schools and look for another opportunity in the future.

Educational challenges in my country

In 2009 I started teaching engineering, nursing, midwifery, education students, and business administration. I stayed in the College Teaching for 7 years. That private institution had helped me to be bolder in teaching since my development became a process a Professor. In 2014, I was invited by the dean of the Graduate school to teach Masteral Students. From Mondays to Fridays, I catered to undergraduate students and teach Master Students during Saturdays and Sundays. My career has been uplifted. My experiences have added. But our country has a problem with its economy. Many of the school's offered salaries were lower than the offer of the other Asian countries. Students weren't able to attend college since most of them have financial problems. They tend to work at an early age and attend school after several years of working.

In 2017, I transferred to the public service. I applied to the public school and luckily passed the screening. On my first day of teaching, I was excited and enthusiastic. I walked toward my room and started setting my stuff. I was preparing my Projector when one of the teachers approached me and told me that I cannot use that since the building has no electricity (as of this moment, that building has no electricity yet and I am thankful that I am transferred now in the New building with minimal use of electricity since the school has no transformer and the power trips all the time). I felt the sudden rush of sadness. I had had my International career and my College Teaching with no problems with electricity and the like and suddenly appeared to have problems with the stated stuff. I was devastated at first. Public schools in the Philippines have problems with facilities. I was the saddest teacher during that time. I kept quiet for some time. I was thinking vividly about where and how to start up. How could I teach them? After a few minutes, I grabbed the chalk and started writing on the blackboard. I told myself that electricity may be out of context, but there are other ways how I can still teach my students. I started to talk, explain, give examples and tell stories with our subject *"21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World."*

The eyes of my students were transparent. I can feel their appreciation during that time. After my first class, I cried. I cried not because I found ways how to teach, I cried because I saw the appreciation on their faces!

Challenges faced by me as a teacher

Aside from the problem of electricity in the public school where I am connected now, teaching in the public school isn't about teaching at all. First, you needed to have different ancillaries or extra tasks to do; the ancillaries are those extra work that the school needs to determine now and then. Second, from 2018-2020, I have had five (5) ancillaries to work, 7-10 subjects to teach with 3-5 preparations. It was hard. My survival in teaching was immeasurable. In the school where I am connected, it is the working people where I am getting my strength, without them, I will not survive. I am thankful that I am with a very approachable head and cooperative and kind co-teachers. It is always true that no matter how hard the tasks are when people around you show support, nothing will be finished beautifully. Third, there are some points in my life when I thought I will finish my teaching career because I felt it was unfair on my part. In our country, promotion comes in competition. And sometimes, the competition turned into the worst experience. My colleagues in Global Forum, your group gave me hope. I sincerely thank you for the opportunity to open myself in this Global Program. You gave me the bright side of teaching. Because of your program, I started to appreciate more my career.

Unique strategies I have used to overcome the challenges in teaching

To overcome the challenges in teaching especially in this new normal form of education, I came to use video teaching. When I transferred to the new Senior High School Building last year, I was able to use more of the technology. Although the use of the stated is minimal, there is a big gap as for the recent years. Tabangao Integrated School is blended in form nowadays when it comes to distance learning. One of the ways to minimize the problems in teaching is one on one tutorials to students who are having problems with the subjects they are taking for the semester. House visitation is also one of the strategies although dangerous to do so because of the present situation of the country.

Things to improve in my teaching practice

I consider myself a halfway teacher. I have still a lot to know, experience to look for and deal with. I want to improve still my speaking skills, I want to widen more my knowledge which is why I join different groups about teaching careers. I want to improve more my language learning. I want to study different languages to be able to talk confidently to different people of different nationalities. If the stated will be possible, my teaching practice will improve in different areas; teaching-learning, knowledge gaps, and shared experiences.

Message

Knowing you all virtually was a chance I won't forget. Teaching has been my life since 2003 and became my life's miracle until now, it may be hard most of the time but fulfilling. Let us all continue to be the inspirations of all the students around the Globe. More years in teaching and more experiences and knowledge to share!



ABHISHEK, INDIA

Assistant Professor and Course Coordinator-BCA

Directorate of Online Education, Manipal University Jaipur, India



I work as an Assistant Professor in the BCA Department at the Directorate of Online Education, Manipal University Jaipur. I have over 6 years of research and teaching experience. I have published research papers in various referred journals and conferences.

I love the teaching profession because it is the noblest profession that has connected me with the young generation for nation-building. Through teaching, I motivate my students to realize and exceed their inner potentials. Every single day, the teacher makes a difference in someone's life which goes far beyond knowledge.

I join the teaching profession with a zeal to transform the young generation and to contribute and share what I have learned for the betterment of society. Teaching always inspires me to learn new things and share that with my students. To learn, unlearn and relearn, and contribute that information with our students, is my motive.

The good thing about education in my country

Indian Education offers a rich education system. We have more than a million schools and around 36,000 institutes for higher education. Free and compulsory education in India is provided to children under the age group 6-14 years. By student enrollment, India has the largest Open University in the world i.e. Indira Gandhi National Open University.

Educational challenges in my country

Indian government and institutions have been working diligently to reform the existing education system. However, there are still several issues that need immediate attention. Some of the key issues are:

- Most of the villages in India do not have proper schools, which compel the students to travel a few kilometers to attain basic education.
- The medium of instruction particularly in science subjects is English. But the rural students are not well versed in English.
- During the recent pandemic, we witnessed a digital divide among rural and urban learners.

Challenges faced by me as a teacher

- The digital divide among students
- Lack of parental Support
- Applying a prescribed curriculum to all types of students

Unique strategies I have used to overcome the challenges in teaching

- To cope with the problem of the digital divide among my students during a recent pandemic, I called my students, who lacked the facility of mobile phone or internet, and taught them in person to avoid a gap in studies.
- To increase the parents' involvement, I connected them through Edmodo LMS, and shared learners' performance with them. As an alternate, I called parents over call to inform their child's progress and tried to understand the reasons behind the low performance of some students.
- Applying the same curriculum to learners of different needs is a quite challenging task for a teacher. I used various tech tools like Jam board, Whiteboard, Kahoot, quizizz, mentimeter, Online games, online icebreakers, and 3D Animation, to reach learners' needs.

Things to improve in my teaching practice

I want to learn about friendly tools that can accommodate diverse learners' needs.

Message

We live in the world's largest knowledge society and belong to the largest pool of knowledge since the dawn of civilization. Let us use technology as a tool to collaborate, and share knowledge for the inclusive development of our society.



ASMA AFZAL, PAKISTAN

Deputy District Education Officer

Government of Sindh



I started my career as a General Science and Mathematics teacher in 1989. Since then, I have been actively engaged in teaching learners with full zeal. In my vision, teaching is a profession that has no extent. One can teach and learn the same thing in many different ways. Teaching has always brought joy and happiness in my personal and professional life. Ever since I stepped into a teaching career, I have focused on helping students learn innovative things, and that has given me a sense of belongingness to this profession.

I love my profession as a teacher from the core of my heart. Teachers are often known as role models. I love teaching because, with time, I crave to explore more. As a teacher, I can positively inculcate positive values among learners. In schools, pupils come from contrasting backgrounds followed by different norms and values, students with numerous statutes, abilities, and disabilities. All these have helped me develop a sense of empathy for all the students. Moreover, I love to disinfest the myth that school is boring for students' brains, by igniting the spark of learning and enthusiasm. Teaching has led me to experience a diverse world and helped them build self-esteem and to be confident about it. As a teacher, I have a reason for what I am doing and that has helped bring meaning to my life.

I would like to mention a provoking saying by Jean Jacques "Plants are shaped by cultivation and men by education"

I possess the painstaking skills and command over my assigned tasks and can execute all my professional responsibilities with competence and dignity as a teacher, manager, administrator, and resource person. I enjoy independent individuals and groups of motivated learners.

Being very fortunate, I have encountered the best and inspirational teachers in my student life, who pushed me through hard times and shaped me into a dynamic educator. I wanted to be that drive within the lives of students---presenting myself as a portrayal of learning, as somebody who inspires others through deliberate guidelines.

The good thing about education in my country

- The Pakistani government is trying to improve quality education. Teacher centered approach is gradually shifting to a child-centered approach. All teachers are appointed on merit at the school level. The government introduced teaching qualifications for the capacity building of teachers. This step has increased the educational level for teachers as well as educational managers in the reputed universities. Our Madressah education system offers free food as well as shelter to students.
- The fee structure is feasible for students.
- The government grants endowment funds for needy students to continue their higher education.

Educational challenges in my country

Even though Pakistan has evolved, education in public institutes is in a deplorable state. Although the government has initiated several programs, none are executed with passion. There is a change in the curriculum every year, yet teachers are not trained to implement amended policies and syllabus. Teachers are known as role models but without any proper guidelines, they become numb and use traditional ways of teaching. There is a lack of legitimate navigation and training for the teachers. Teachers are unable to cope up with adapting to new ways of teaching. There is a lack of funds given to the schools, and hence any sort of sustainable infrastructural plan of action cannot take place.

Challenges faced by me as a teacher

- A teacher-centered approach is still being used in public sectors schools
- Multiple educational systems are running in our country
- Language barrier
- Discriminatory educational practices based on socioeconomic background
- Our education curriculum does not match with market demand, often our students pass out with a row hand.
- Poor infrastructure in public sector schools
- Non-availability of basic facilities are missing in institutions like sanitary issues in school for female students
- No budget is allocated for educational exclusion trips
- No training for senior teachers
- Lack of ICT skills
- Lack of teaching-learning resources
- Dropouts and absenteeism

Unique strategies I have used to overcome the challenges in teaching

I completed my university education up to the Ph.D. level from Iqra University, Karachi. I realized that my professional skills as well as leadership skills, in addition to digital skills have helped me excel in my career.

I am a digital immigrant. I have studied research papers and thesis to know the best-teaching learning techniques across the globe and have adapted the best practices. For example, I use cooperative learning techniques in my teaching process.

As a head teacher, I have supported students from Deeni Madressa and offered them admission on a priority basis. I gave them individual attention to bridge academic deficiencies.

As a head teacher, I informed our immediate officer as well as the works department to repair the school building and fulfill basic physical needs. It was because of my tiring efforts, they passed the scheme, and repaired half portion of the school- though some parts still need infrastructural support.

We collected charities and funds from students and teachers and arranged exclusion trips for students.

Under my leadership, newly recruited teachers arranged sessions for senior teachers for developing 21st-century skills among teachers as well as learners.

Things to improve in my teaching practice

I would like to further enhance my digital skills so that I can improve the quality of a technology-enabled learning environment.

I would like to establish a subject-wise classroom, where students' can come to class in respective periods for certain subjects.

I wish to develop a teacher guide for each subject.

I would like to take part in seminars, conferences, online workshops, and courses to polish my existing teaching skills and professionalism.

Studying more research papers to keep updated with the latest educational development.

Message

- The teacher should have a friendly classroom environment
- Every teacher should update teaching skills and also act as a facilitator
- Before adopting any new teaching-learning technique, teachers must do research
- The teacher should keep in mind that each individual is unique

ASHRAFUL WADUD, BANGLADESH

Lecturer of English

Jaintia Degree College, Sylhet, Bangladesh



Teaching is a noble profession. This is one of the most rewarding careers as it shapes the future of a person's life. The knowledge and guidance received from a teacher allow the student to achieve their goal. The process of teaching is a two-way path in which both student and teacher learn from each other. Being in the profession of teaching I have realized that every student is unique and each one has his or her style of learning. Therefore, it is important to facilitate the learning environment in a way in which every student's needs can be accommodated. The greatest compliment as a teacher is to see the success of our students and by knowing that I am a part of their success story.

I admire the teaching profession because of its ability of making difference in human life. Having the opportunity to teach students means shaping their life. Being a teacher I enjoy the ability to inspire my students to be something that they never thought they could be. A teacher's goal is not limited to curriculum teaching but to nourish the young mind to make a better human being who will be well equipped to serve for the betterment of society.

I started teaching because I enjoy learning and love to share my learning experience with others. Teaching as a profession enables and encourages me to learn every day and pass on this knowledge to my students.

The ability to make a difference in students' life attracts me the most. Being a teacher means holding a position of trust and utilizing that position to mentor students to achieve their goals by letting them believe in their inner strength.

The good thing about education in my country

Despite numerous challenges more people willingly send their children to school, which was not common in the past. Especially the need for girls' education was neglected earlier. Now, this has changed more than ever before. The pass rate in the secondary and higher secondary board exam has increased significantly. To meet the demands of the growing number of students more educational institutions were established in recent years by public and private initiatives.

Educational challenges in my country

Bangladesh is a developing country with limited resources. Due to this fact, the government is unable to make sufficient contributions to the education sector. Still, there are villages in Bangladesh where there is no primary school, and the street children often do not have access to primary education. The number of students is growing each year which means teacher often fails to give appropriate attention to each student. This results in poor quality of education. Free education is mostly limited to primary school students. Sadly many students drop out in secondary, higher secondary, and university levels because of poverty.

Challenges faced by me as a teacher

I have been a teacher for over 8 years. I have faced several challenges. The number of students in the classroom has increased rapidly in recent years. However, we still have the same time limit for lecture sessions. These create a challenge to deal with every student's questions during the time constraint lecture hours. In a time of volatile political situations such as strikes result in the closure of the educational institution for an unprecedented time. These sorts of closures heavily disrupt students' studies. At the current time, the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of educational institutions to reduce the spread of the virus have brought new challenges in facilitating the teaching of our students.

Unique strategies I have used to overcome the challenges in teaching

My unique strategy includes engaging students in consultation to resolve challenges in delivering tuition. Engaging student in the facilitation of tuition makes them empowered and they often brought innovative ideas to overcome the problem. For instance, upon consultation on one occasion, I offered students to attend evening classes due to the strike during the day and they participated spontaneously in an evening class. It was not usual for students to attend evening lectures.

Things to improve in my teaching practice

In our education system, it is neglected to have feedback from students. However, I think it is important to have a system in place so that students can provide feedback on teaching. This will enable teachers to know the weak points of their teaching strategy. Eventually, teachers will take initiative to improve their teaching practice to deliver the best outcome for their students.

Message

A teacher is in a unique position to lead students, the future leader of the world. Therefore, it is teachers' responsibility to use this unique position with great care to steer students future in the right direction and to inspire them to steadfast to achieve their goals.



ISTRATE DIANA, ROMÂNIA

Literature Teacher

Școala Gimnazială George Coșbuc, Ploiești



I am a teacher since 2003, for 18 years. This is the only school I worked. Since 2019 I am also a psychologist and I was a volunteer counselor at this school for one year. In the meantime, I open a counseling office and I do workshops in different schools teaching emotional intelligence. My paper subject is about the group I trained last scholar year.

I love working with children and teens because of their sensitivity, sincerity, and creativity. I also think that the future will be positive with happy children.

I joined the profession because I love books and I love to play and communicate. Literature was at the time my big passion and I wanted to share with someone, to cultivate this passion in children.

The good thing about education in my country

The good thing about education is the effort and the energy that teachers put into their activities. For example, during the pandemic, our schools were closed for 9 months last year and we all operated online. The previous summer, I participated with colleagues from all over the country in webinars, courses, and workshops that were not organized by the ministry but by various foundations.

Educational challenges in my country

The education system in Romania is underfunded, it lacks the vision to put children at the center. Only this year there are less than 25 children in a class. I teach in classes of 32, 34 children. We do not have counselors or psychologists in school, although there is a great need. There is one in 600 children at a center. Also, the system does not recognize the merits of teachers. Teachers are burdened with many bureaucratic tasks that steal from the time and energy they would use for activities with children.

Challenges faced by me as a teacher

There is a lack of facilities in the school. I bought my video projector, I made my materials with my own money because the school did not provide us with a photocopier for example for many years. Another problem I faced was teaching online without having too much high-performance technical equipment. The third problem is the lack of interest of students and parents after this period of the pandemic that students spent online.

Unique strategies I have used to overcome the challenges in teaching

Each time I managed to transform the weaknesses in strengths, I focused on the children's reaction, on the final goal - their results at the final exam, on the enthusiasm and affection that some showed me. And because the period of online courses affected the children a lot, I offered them help through the Emotions Workshop and the Hour of Joy. The help we give is the help we give to ourselves. I ask for their feedback throw questionnaires and I took some positive mentality courses

because the pandemic made parents more irritable and difficult. So, the best strategy ever is to think of others and to put some limits when the situation asks.

Things to improve in my teaching practice

Although we don't have much technique either at school and the children didn't have a phone for an online school, I would like to be better at different programs for creating movies, videos.

Message

Dear teachers from all over the world, congratulations on your efforts and a lot of inspiration!



DR. TAQDEES MALIK, PAKISTAN

Assistant Professor, Department of Microbiology

Jinnah University for Women



Since 2010, I was working as a Publishing manager when I was completing my Ph.D. degree, but somewhere inside I have this feeling and motivation towards teaching line. So after completing my degree, I joined Jinnah University for Women at the beginning of the year 2018 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Microbiology. I do remember my first day at university, and I would say, What a pride it was? Students of all the years, either first year or final year, all love to embrace the teachers, respect the teachers and I must say that no matter how many professions have been developed so far in this modern world but the profession of teaching is still the noblest so far. I thoroughly enjoyed teaching throughout my career and I am still enjoying this tenure too much.

As I have already mentioned the motivational transition I felt after joining the teaching career in the above lines. I would certainly start loving my profession as it is not only about the respect I have received but it's about the responsibility I feel in myself after becoming the teacher because the teachers are the ones who can build a society and a good nation after parents. And I felt these changes in my personality after being associated with this profession. This profession has not only helped out to build others but to build me.

Although initially when I thought to join this profession, I was not very much clear about the targets and goals I would like to achieve after becoming a teacher but when I entered into this profession I felt how significant a role of a teacher could be in nation-building. Students-teacher association and relationships motivated me to continue with this profession.

The good thing about education in my country

Despite, multiple issues faced by the middle or lower-middle class, most of the people tried to get their kids admitted to schools so that at least they gain basic knowledge and skills. The government is also thriving hard to improve the curriculum, infrastructure of the schools, colleges, universities, etc. Few of the schemes have also been started like disseminating of free laptops, indigenous scholarship programs, etc.

Educational challenges in my country

First of all, here I would like to mention the first problem, we did not find any proper statistical data of the people who are educated or uneducated in the developing country like Pakistan, However, as per the random guess, I would say that the major issues which we are facing in connection with education are the low income of the middle class or lower-middle-class individuals. People who cannot afford basic living needs, do not consider education as a priority for their children. And if we specifically refer to the period of Covid-19, we can easily observe the scarcity of resources and the advanced technology in most people. I also feel certain discrepancies in the education system and curriculum that should be updated on the regular basis. The education

system should invest more in the improvement of the infrastructure of the schools, colleges, universities, etc. to facilitate the overall academic and research sector.

Challenges faced by me as a teacher

Though before Covid, I did not find any major issues concerning the academics or research as my organization is trying to fulfill all the required essentials which are needed for the students and faculties but specifically during the covid period, we faced certain problems related to the technology-based equipment and IT awareness among the senior teachers who always prefer to work manually.

However, the education system can always be improved and updated so it needs regular up-gradation of curriculum as per the international standards. All Universities must have daycare centers, and hostels so that students that are coming from far away can get the required accommodations. Since I am working in a university that is only for girls, I observed that due to certain familial issues, some girls could not be able to complete their Education which is very bad. Gender biasedness should be removed from every culture so that women can get their education with equal rights as men.

Unique strategies I have used to overcome the challenges in teaching

During my tenure as a chairperson, I tried to convince the parents of most of the students, who did not want their girls to go for further education.

I tried to resolve the issues related to the academic charges so that students could continue their studies. I tried to establish their connections with certain organizations and institutes where they can do their part-time jobs for managing their academic expenses. Moreover, I tried to establish their links with international societies like the American Society of Microbiology so that they can participate in International Webinars, Seminars, Conferences, etc. that can boost their motivation and confidence to excel more in their life.

Things to improve in my teaching practice

During the Covid period, I got a chance to participate in multiple online sessions, webinars, and training for the improvement of my teaching skills specifically for online learning (blended and hybrid both). But there is always room for improvement in every field of work so I would like to learn more things about cognitive load theory, creative learning strategies, etc.

Message

I would like to say that a teacher should understand that what a wonderful weapon, he is holding in his hand which can only be used positively for the betterment and growth of the entire society. They should learn how to use it to the fullest.



SALMA NIAZI, PAKISTAN

Lecturer

Jinnah University for Women, Karachi Pakistan



And think not you can guide the course of 'love',
For if 'love' finds you worthy, it shall guide your course.

Khalil Jibran

Creating a world in which love for learning prevails has been the motto of my life. After graduating from Jinnah University for women, my desire to teach grew stronger and ultimately became a passion the moment I was offered to teach in this prestigious institution.

The passion led me to teach. I remember the day, trembling from head to foot, I was sort of ordered to take up the post of lecturer in English at the department because they urgently needed one. I am honored to work with my respected teachers and mentors in my alma mater. I remember the day of convocation I joined as a position holder in the department of English and as a faculty member as well. I was shining bright among my batch.

The semester started forming the appropriate lecture for the class I would hear my heart thumping loudly. Surprised by my confident lectures and enjoyed making students' concepts easier to grasp. I enjoyed bringing examples from real life into discussions and the strategies to make concepts easier to understand for the student.

I remember the advice of my loving father to practice the lecture in front of him. He imbibed confidence in me by appreciation.

Fond memories of those days are too many to be expressed in words.

My addiction to learning and excelling in academics compelled me to enroll in MPhil and earn a degree in M.Phil Education.

Despite having 4 kids and married life, I dragged myself in many co-curricular activities and attended many national and international conferences' have enrolled in Ph.D. Education though it is a Herculean task for me.

For, as the saying goes, once a teacher, always a teacher. There are many exciting memories from my days of teaching the English language and literature.

Once I gave students assignments to prepare a chart depicting the use of the articles and prepositions a wonderful outcome of this exercise was that many charts were prepared and students learned the use of parts of speech. Another time, gave each group an activity to depict on soft board each literary movement by appropriate examples they prepared interesting and

informative soft boards. Once I gave an assignment of writing a book review. I remember that students enjoyed it a lot and it improved their reading skills.

I am reminded of a very famous saying “If you love what you do, you will never have to work a single day in your life”

I remember the day when I received the title of a million-dollar smile.

It is impossible to deny the significance of research and innovation in the field of English language teaching in Pakistan. It is my utmost desire to serve my country Pakistan. I felt the need for innovation and selected innovation in teaching and learning as my research topic.

Harmer, (2007) defined the teacher metaphorically as an actor playing many roles. It appears as they are the actors on stage and performing their roles on the stage and just feel themselves as they are always on the stage. Then he gives an example of gardeners as they are planting the seeds and then watching them grow and it is the teacher who is not only imparting knowledge but also facilitating knowledge in the learning environment. I have tried my best to imbibe the quest for knowledge among my students.

It is impossible to deny the significance of research and innovation in the field of English language teaching in Pakistan. It is my utmost desire to serve my country Pakistan. I felt the need for innovation in teaching I have selected the topic for my dissertation as, incorporation of Bloom’s taxonomy and English Language teaching. I have submitted many research grants for the uplifting of the name of my alma mater and knowing the fact that research in the field of teaching and English language is rewarding in Pakistan.

Turn the pages of history and you will find all great personalities as teachers. The holy Quran signifies the importance of teaching and the spread of knowledge. The prophet peace be upon him emphasized that his primary duty as a Prophet was to teach by saying, “I have been sent only as a teacher to you”. To explain his duty he also said “I have been sent to complete moral virtues”

The good thing about education in my country

Our beloved country Pakistan is an agricultural country where about 75% population is based on agriculture. They are not only Farmers but can be called poor people. Moreover, the facilities of education are not very common in the village.

Among the sustainable development goals, the member 4 SDG is very important. Education helps to seek a very good life in the world, so it becomes very imperative that education should be spread all over the country especially in Pakistan which is our beloved country.

Educational challenges in my country

Poverty and Illiteracy- Poverty indulges man in other wrong deeds. So to remove other criminal activities from society education is important. Education is to earn money. It will improve the standard of living. But it should not be earned solely for the virtue of earning. It is a blight if a student is not receiving education the help the country.

Challenges faced by me as a teacher

I remember the days when we were teaching using dusters and chalks. It was very irritating for the eyes and turned my hair full of white dust.

The more educated the youth, the more bright will be the future of any nation. One of the major challenges of countless social and economic issues is the low-quality education system. Among all the SDGs, SDG4 mainly highlights providing high-quality education. SDG4 means, striving to have every child receiving high-quality education by 2030. The major hindrance in learning skills is being taught by the teachers, who are not interested in the professional development programs. The dominating factor in the lack of keen interest in learning is professionally incompetent instructors, poor lesson planning skills, faulty policies, and lack of guidance about curriculum development. But out of various contributing factors of lack of English speaking among students, the dominating factor is teachers' inability to shoulder the responsibility of their professional grooming.

Unique strategies I have used to overcome the challenges in teaching

To teach 21st-century learners, it is important to integrate technology in the classroom, and to adopt new strategies in formatting instructional content is the need of the time. Effective technology integration is an integral element in the digital transformation of English language teachers in the post-pandemic era. For online classes, it is significant to create a multimedia presentation with animations, games, text, audio, photos, and videos.

Things to improve in my teaching practice

Effective technology integration requires a dynamic alignment of content, pedagogy, technology, and a teaching and learning context; then we will attain the intended learning outcomes of English language teaching in the 21st century, online classes.

Message

Teachers' professional development opportunities are regarded as a vital building block in changing classroom practices, improving understanding, and ameliorating students learning outcomes. The professional development sessions based on collaboration and continuous efforts will be rewarding and constructive. Teachers are development leaders.



HIDAYAH NOR, INDONESIA

English Education Department Lecturer

UIN Antasari Banjarmasin



Shortly after completing my first degree, around 2010, I began my teaching career as an English instructor in the English language center at UIN Banjarmasin, teaching general English to incoming first-year students, for first and second semester students in all disciplines, under the direction of the language development center, independent of the English teacher education program. Then, I worked concurrently as a part-time English language instructor for children at a private English course. Until now, I have taught in the English Education Department and shared with my students my enthusiasm for English language education. I usually teach *Basic Listening* and *Intermediate Listening Skills* courses, but more recently taught *Extensive Reading* and *Essay Writing*. I have taught a variety of courses in the English Language Education Department, according to department needs, from *Psycholinguistics* to *TOEFL Preparation*.

Because the condition of my students in the English department is mostly from rural backgrounds in Central and South Kalimantan, often with limited formal training in English, hoping to become future English teachers in junior and senior high schools or to try their luck as translators, tour guides, or employees of international companies working in the area. I want to help my students to pursue their dreams.

I originally began studying English because of my parents' recommendation, with the idea that it would open doors of opportunity for her future. At the time, I was not interested in becoming a teacher and had my mind set on entering the world of business. At first, I found my studies quite challenging and considered dropping out of the program. I continued because of my parents' encouragement and because I wanted to see my hard work pay off. I am uniquely positioned to understand my students' doubts and fears, because of my journey to become a teacher. I believe that the most important life skills my students can develop are critical thinking, honesty, and perseverance. In my classroom, I strive to understand each student's story and personal background. I want to see each of my students harvest the fruit of individual hard work.

The good thing about education in my country

Over the past few decades, Indonesia has made great strides in improving access to education. Indonesian children are starting school earlier and staying in school longer than they ever have before. These efforts to expand the supply of education have intersected with rising income levels, demographic changes, and government efforts to provide free education, all of which have served to increase the demand for education. The central government also introduced a competency test for teachers to assess their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. In addition, Indonesians have become more interested in learning foreign languages, especially English, that an international school education automatically provides.

Educational challenges in my country

The curriculum problem, the problem of education in Indonesia is the length of study every day. Students are required to study for at least 12 years. Every day, students spend 7-9 hours at school. Students are also burdened by school assignments and homework assignments.

The example that happened in my teaching experience is the newest lesson plan of 2013 curriculum revision focused on 4 important things especially in the teaching and learning activities which are the characters education, the literacy activities, 4c's (communicative, collaborative, critical thinking, and creativity), and the last one is Higher Order Thinking Skills from Anderson Taxonomy which consist of Analyzing, Evaluating, and Applying.

Challenges faced by me as a teacher

I have found that most of the students appreciate the speed, efficiency, and independence that blended learning offers, even though there are challenges to overcome, like the time it takes to learn to use new platforms and the difficulty of finding and maintaining a reliable internet connection. As Banjarmasin has semi-regular power outages and wired internet connections are rare in homes, most of my students access the online classroom through their mobile phones.

Students in the English department are mostly from rural backgrounds in Central and South Kalimantan, often with limited formal training in English. Over half of the students in the English Education department question whether or not they plan to become teachers after graduation.

Unique strategies I have used to overcome the challenges in teaching

For my students, I have the strategy to ask them at the beginning of our meeting until the third week of the meeting to sit down based on the number of their presence lists so I can easily remember their names and I also do not know why I tend to remember the complete name of the students maybe it is because I always call their names at the beginning of the class to check their attendance and I communicate extensively with them both inside and outside the classroom. I gave the motivation for the students to do their assignments directly after getting from the lecturers and do not delay it because a very long time ago until now I have the principle to never put off until tomorrow what you can do today and I always tell to my students that never give up easily and you should study hard and be a humble person. I ensure them that everything difficult will be easy when we give our best effort in doing the things.

Things to improve in my teaching practice

I began experimenting with blended learning in the courses I taught at UIN. I introduced my students to an online learning management system (LMS) and encouraged the use of online discussions to keep my students active outside of class time and to maximize opportunities for peer evaluation and self-reflection. I required my students to submit work and comment and interact with the work of their peers. The following semester I continued experimenting with autonomous learning strategies in my listening skills class. I realized the curriculum didn't allow enough time to cover all of the recommended skills that would help my students prepare for an upcoming TOEFL exam, so I assigned various TOEFL listening skills to different students, who each produced short instructional videos, which peers could watch on their own time outside of class. Through this technique, I saw my students' motivation and engagement increase as they were given greater responsibility to control learning. Besides making it possible to cover all of the

recommended material, students now have access to a small collection of peer-produced videos which they will be able to use for review and further individual study after the end of the course.

Message

The last I say that even in the unexpected situation, we have to think creatively to reach unbelievable results like my students and I did in our online course. You have to remember that we as teachers who will make a difference in our classroom by what we have done in our ways. We have to fight against whatever situations that we face to have the best results in the teaching and learning and to make a better future for the students.



(Posing with an Extensive Reading class)

SARAH ASHAR, PAKISTAN

Academic Coordinator

Al Badar School



My teaching career started when I was 18. It was just a start and I didn't know that this was going to continue for the rest of my life. I got married and life changed. For a childless woman, this profession was the most helpful thing to come out of depression, anxiety, and frustration. Entering into my classroom had always been a wonderful and joyous experience for me. My thirst for motherhood somehow started to vanish and I now believe that there are children who are ignored by their homes so maybe I am the one who can light up their world. Working in the field for almost 12 years now, I have countless inspiring stories. I have laughed and even cried with my students, they are my family, one big family. When I recall all my past experiences, I start feeling my worth. This profession is so noble and sacred. I know each student quite well. They grew in front of me. Many of them got married. But my love for them can never be diminished. I am proud of what I am and the credit goes to all my students, for them, I am a mother, a guide, a mentor, and one good friend. Life will go on and I will have more of these experiences by the time. I can proudly say in heaven, I am a mother of thousands of children. For me it's just a profession, it's my life's only earnings. The respect I get from my students and my community is priceless. To be the best amongst all you only need a pure heart, pure intentions, and lots of unbiased love. You have to love all of them unconditionally.

This is the professional who makes possible all other professions. I love and respect my profession and I am thankful to my creator that I have got my reason to live. I am very proud of my work, my first and most important responsibility is the success of my students which would be my biggest accomplishment. The one main reason to love my work is to touch the soul of a child which I think only the true mentor can. Throughout my teaching career, I have listened many times to children expressing their love for me. I have always been declared "The Best Teacher" wherever I have worked. Isn't this worth living for? I love my profession because I have the privilege to make a difference in children's life. There are times as a teacher when you are at a critical crossroads with a student and the road the walk-on will make a big difference. I think it's divine, coming from heaven. I have made a strong relationship with my students, in all these years. I love my journey and I wish it goes on.

I did not come into this profession accidentally. Since childhood, I always wanted to be a teacher. I used to admire my teachers a lot and I still remember my first-grade teacher. I pray for all of them. I joined this profession of my passion and urge to deal with young kids. I am an ECE expert and I love to see tiny brains molding and growing. They always give me a new aspect of life. Throughout my student life, I have come across many teachers and facilitators and they played a great role in making me what I am today. Their personalities, their teaching styles, their capabilities, their strength, and their love motivated me to become a teacher. Not just a teacher but a 'mentor'. Today I am proud of my work, my dignity, my success, my courage, and my self-competency. I want to do more and more for students every day because they keep lifting my spirit.

The good thing about education in my country

The good thing in my country about education is that teachers have multiple training and learning resources. We need passionate individuals who can get training from these certified academies nationally and internationally. We have many conferences which are held in our country where teachers get free training that could help them groom more. Every year we have international conferences like SPELT. Public and private schools support these programs and send their teachers to get trained.

Educational challenges in my country

The one problem which I want to highlight here is the divide in education. Education standards are not the same for everyone. At the government level, we need to work o end up this great divide by implementing the same curriculum. The public schools are much capable and I believe they have the potential to bring a revolution in education. A financially stable student who can afford all the finances of elite schools is always demanded in society and given extra privilege and honor but on the other hand, students who are under privilege and have the poor financial stability to bear the educational expenses do not have more opportunities. We need to understand that by providing equal resources to our children nationwide, we would seek more potential and skilled youth.

Challenges faced by me as a teacher

The first challenge I face as a teacher is a lack of awareness among parents. They spoil children by poor parenting and are responsible for upbringing an individual with poor mental, emotional and physical health. In today's world parents needs to learn how can they be more effective adults who can deal fair with a child. One child of my class was always found disturbed and frustrated and the reason behind was his parents' continuous demands of high grades. He was suffering from extreme anxiety and going towards mental disorders. I then called his parents and counsel them and asked them to attend a few workshops and it helped. Parenting should be taught as a subject at the college or university level to make sure that adults are now ready to deal with the child righteously.

The second challenge I always faced was a lack of resources and lack of technology in my classroom. I was not provided and facilitated with the advanced teaching resources due to which students were not prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century and Corona has proved it right. We then had to train parents and students to take online classes. Still, many new parents face the same issue. They don't have the awareness to use gadgets and online tools for learning. This was one of the major drawbacks.

Another challenge that I faced as a teacher was being forced to learn in a non-productive environment. We had to follow the strict syllabus each term. Students had to sit all day long and study. That was not enjoyable at all. They always wanted to explore nature, go outside and play but school's particular routine and timetable never allowed them to do so. I remember, one child used to sleep all the time because she found the day very boring, I then took my class outside for some time and they insisted to be there. They wanted their classrooms without walls, full of colors, and full of life. They wanted to study at their own pace and learning style but our syllabus did not allow all these things. I still feel pity and will always have a soft corner for learners who want to learn things in a new way. Maybe in a garden, or at the beach or on a farm. Why can't we give

them chances to learn in the real world? Why can't they just travel and see the world? We need to give teach them life skills, communications skills, socializing skills, and whatnot but our syllabus does not support all this. I pray that one day we all come with new ideas and a big revolution in schooling.

Unique strategies I have used to overcome the challenges in teaching

There are countless strategies I have used for any reason. The best strategy for me is to 'listen to children'. Listen to their problems, listen about their life, what they want from what they want to be, how they see the world!

This one strategy will help you to connect with their little hearts. You cannot imagine the power of listening. Many times in my career, listening helped me. My students gave me courage by pouring their hearts out, by telling me their problems, their lives' worst, and their best experiences. So many times, they have taught me to take my mind in another direction, in a positive one! They have, what we as an adult in our lives need to have – to express – to trust someone by telling them all about you and to have a great sense of hope. I will never forget the way my students have inspired me and motivated me every single day to be the best version of myself.

Things to improve in my teaching practice

There are days when you feel that you have lost the day. A good educator reflects on his/her teaching experience and always learns from it. I want to improve my teaching practice by reflecting more each day. I want to know the time when I was not able to make a connection with my students. I also need to overcome over-facilitating my students in certain cases. I want to make them enough courageous and confident so that they will be ready for the challenges in their lives. Acts of teachers leave a deep impact on student's lives and are taken very much seriously by the students consciously and subconsciously. They are very honest towards their teachers and expect the same from them. I think every morning you get a new chance and end up with a variety of experiences and by reflecting upon it, we would open new horizons of understanding a child.

Message

The one message that I would like to give Global Teachers is a big thanks for providing such platforms where we connect with educators around the world. This online learning hub has given me a lot of new learning experiences, especially during Covid. We look forward to some more great sessions, conferences, and healthy competitions.



ANNA LOU M. CARREON, PHILIPPINES

Special Program in Sports Coordinator

Fort Bonifacio High School



They said that teaching is the noblest profession and greatest vocation! That is my belief since college when I enrolled in the Philippine Normal University, our country's National Center for Teacher Education. In this institution, we were trained to love our craft and ignite our passion for teaching.

As a teacher for more than 10 years, I can say that I still have the feeling of excitement to teach and even to go to school especially since we had more than a year of online classes. I find ways to motivate myself to teach my students and be well-prepared in front of them. I'm looking forward to seeing all my students and colleagues in person.

There are times I still asked myself why I chose this profession. I grabbed the opportunity this quarantine time to meditate and search to my inner core that passion that I had lost quite some time especially during the first quarter of the pandemic last year.

But I realized, I just need to be inspired again like I was in my first year of teaching. Teachers with passion inspire students. Students as one of my enable my passion to teach and the center of the teaching and learning process. It ignites my passion to make my students decide to study more and be resilient despite any situation.

Although most of the time I'm burnt out of all the workloads and the compensation was not enough in all the things that I do. Sometimes I want to change my career path, but I just think of my former and present students who are successful in their chosen field of interest or career. I know that I'm part of that success!

First, I think my family was the one that enables me to continue to pursue this career. Most of our family members are teachers and graduated from Philippine Normal University. They are the one who inspires me to take education and follow in their footsteps. I can say that teaching is a good source of income I can provide to my family to have a stable future especially nowadays that it is hard to lose and quit a job. Next, I want to become part of innovation in the educational system in our country. Despite the pandemic, we are experiencing right now like what always said in the Department of Education that "Learning Never Stops!" We must continue in improving ourselves and providing good education to our students. Learning is a continuous process not only for our students but also for us teachers. You cannot share which you do not have which means we have to strive hard to improve our skills and expand our knowledge.

The good thing about education in my country

The government particularly the Department of Education is working hard to make our teachers, students, as well as our parents to be ready by rendering a lot of training online and webinars. They

conducted a lot of webinars to equip the teachers in ICT like using the different tools and applications for online distance learning. Almost every day we have Open Education Resources training on Facebook live and YouTube to create our lessons.

Last year, the department made a big step in creating a DEPED TV channel and radio station to all students who have a problem with internet connection. Aside from that, all regional offices directed the division offices to start working with their self-learning modules in all the subjects aside from the modules that the department of education provided to us.

This problem will not resolve solely by the Department of Education that is why the different local government units gave devices and funding to the division offices to create or purchase learning management systems, devices, communication allowances, and the like. These benefits will not only for students but also the teachers.

All sectors of society must work together. This pandemic challenged our education system, but it will not hinder us to study and continue to learn.

Educational challenges in my country

Last year, this pandemic caused a lot of changes in our educational system. The reality is that no one is ready for these abrupt changes. Teaching becomes more challenging and tough. We struggle with virtual classroom management, meeting most essential learning competencies, and dealing with administrative leaders that sometimes hinder our abilities to create our desired classroom environment. Thus, it requires more work, imagination, and research so teachers will find a way to get more interested in what they are teaching and to make things more interesting for their students.

But after a year, I can say that we slowly cope up with this kind of set-up. Still, we need to be prepared for the next normal which is face-to-face instruction. We are left behind in terms of conducting face-to-face classes because of high rates of covid patients in our country and we are still far behind in the target percentage of vaccinated individuals.

Right now, the Department of Education is identifying schools that can pilot face-to-face classes. Also, students who are in a far-flung area have a disadvantage in using the technology due to poor internet connection and no gadgets to be used for their online classes.

Challenges faced by me as a teacher

Because of the abrupt changes that happened last year, I experienced depression and sort of mental health issues. As a teacher, we have a big responsibility in maintaining good mental health in this time of crisis. I fight this feeling by continuing to connect with other people, exercise, get enough sleep, meditate, and eat nutritious food. I spent more time with my family. They are my support system and some organizations advocate about how to overcome mental health problems.

Also, I struggle to train myself in abreast of different approaches, technologies, modalities, and techniques that I can use during online classes without sacrificing the quality education that students truly deserve.

Lastly, the collaboration with other stakeholders particularly the parents. They need to prepare and learn to monitor and supervise their children to assure quality learning while at home. Students must be familiarized with accessing different online tools or platforms the teaching and learning process takes place. Parents too, need to learn this for them enable to guide their children.

Unique strategies I have used to overcome the challenges in teaching

Use social media and other platforms to connect with your students and other stakeholders. Frequent follow-ups to students and parents especially to the learning progress of their children will help both parties to monitor their progress and instill discipline.

Aside from that, I used materials or supplies which are available in our house. We used stuff toys in teaching Bandaging and First Aid. They used plastic bottles as their weights and tin cans as their cones to perform the different physical fitness tests. I make sure that I can sustain their interest by providing activities that they can participate actively like gamification and using different online tools or applications. I asked them to involve their siblings and their parents in performing their tasks in my subject like doing physical activities or exercises with the whole family.

Things to improve in my teaching practice

I think to be more innovative and creative in delivering my lessons whether it is an online class or a face-to-face class. I want to integrate the concepts of Global Citizenship Education in my subject so that students are already aware of this and start thinking and creating actions in advocating GCED in their capacity and network.

Message

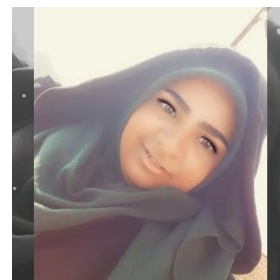
There are times in every teacher's life where they wonder if they made the right decision if it could be easier doing something else and if it's all worth it. Then they think back to all the times where a child finally solved a problem, or when a former student approached them thanking them for being such a wonderful teacher.

As global teachers, we should not depend on the grades that our students had because scholastic performance is not necessarily the sole indicator of a person's potential for making valuable contributions to society. Education and school are the catalyst of change for the reconstruction and reformation of society. We have a big role to change and transform the world through teaching the next generation to make them realize their potential in contributing to nation-building.



GLOBAL STUDENT CORNER

NEHA ZEHRA JAFFER MERCHANT, TURKEY



I am Neha Zehra and I am 17 years old. I have completed my IGCSE privately from Turkey with the help of my tutors, Sir Adamjee Imran for Mathematics, Sir Murtaza Moosa for Science, and Sir Zeeshan Mujtaba for English. I achieved 2A*s and 3A's. At present, I am doing my A-levels at Jasmine International School. I have an interest in teaching. I have already taught English to students of grades 1-10 and Mathematics to my brother's friend and his sibling.

I am a Tanzanian citizen and my family shifted to Pakistan when I was 5 months old. I have completed my primary education till grade 1 from The City School. I was enrolled in City School in a daycare at the age of 16 months. After daycare, I studied nursery, kinder garden, and grade 1. In grade 1, I was elected as the deputy head girl because of my leadership quality. From grade 2 till grade 4, I studied in Saint Michaels Convent School, where I was a gold medalist for 3 consecutive years. Changing schools at a young age was challenging- both academically and socially.

In 2015, we shifted to the Maldives. There, I completed my grade 5-8. However, in between, we had to shift islands due to dad's job transfer. I completed my grade 5-6 from Afeefudin School in Kulhuduffushi Island, which is located in the north of Maldives, and from grades 6-8, I studied at Thinadhoo School in Thinadhoo Island located in the south of Maldives. It was quite challenging to shift as I had to cope up with the missing work. My biggest fear was to understand and manage education smoothly. Despite this, I was a grade-A achiever throughout my educational journey. Gradually, I started enjoying school time with Maldivian friends and Indian teachers. I took part in different competitions. Every day, we saw different colors of island life. Swimming in the oceans was the best part.

Apart from my study life, I have done various online courses from Future learn. I have also done an American English MOOC Teaching course on Canvas. In November 2018, we had to leave the Maldives and shift to Dar-es-salaam, Tanzanian in East Africa for some time but could not settle. Then, my mom-a a courageous warrior decided to shift to Turkey. While living in Turkey, we did some research and found out that the education medium was in Turkish. It compelled me to return to Pakistan. There, I studied at the Kauthar College in Islamabad and completed grade 9. Hostel life was quite challenging for me as I was away from home for the first time.

Before joining Kauthar College, I taught English Voluntarily to students of grades 1-10 at a nonprofit school for about a month. I took part in so many different competitions. I even topped the region in ICATS Essay writing competition.

In July 2020, I again moved to Turkey and did my IGCSE and now I will complete my A-levels. While I was preparing for my IGCSE exams, my brothers, their friend, and his siblings were having

their annual exams. I prepared all 5 of them for their Mathematics paper and they got a good grade which was a proud moment for me.

"It doesn't matter from where the sun rises it always shines bright. And no matter where I live or which country I study I always try and believe in shining bright."



