My Dream as a Teacher of English Learners

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I had played basketball for a long time before I wanted to be an English teacher. After I quit playing basketball as an athlete because of constant injuries that I got in University, I had no choice but to do something else. I wanted to choose something I love and that I could put all my efforts in as a job. I had several years of experiences of teaching English but I really wanted to know how to teach it effectively and efficiently. I graduated from university, majored in Social Physical Education. Living as an athlete in Korea meant that I had to focus only on basketball. I had no chance to study any kinds of subjects in high school, so it was hard for me to study something.

To make a story short, I decided to study abroad in Canada. Since I came back to Korea, I have been studying English to become a teacher. After I taught English to students from elementary to high school, I felt I needed some more education to teach them better. When I was in Canada, I had a chance to take a TESOL course, but I couldn’t because my English was poor and was not ready to take it at that time. After searching TESOL course on the Internet, I found a perfect course, which was this TESOL course provided at California State University at Long Beach Times Media TESOL Center. I hope it will broaden my knowledge of teaching English methods and I will make friends who are also interested in English through this course.

When I was 12 years old, I went to a private English institute. I had so much fun there. I learned English as a language, not as a tool that I had to use to get a good grade on an English test. I was good at it at that time and I was so excited about the fact I could communicate with a foreign teacher in English. I, however, lost the interest when I got into middle school, especially when I was in the 3rd grade. I am not saying the teachers were bad, but I had a hard time understanding all the grammatical terms that they used. I felt it was like an alien language that they taught. The teachers did not seem to know how to speak English. They were not to blame but that was how they were taught because they had to see English as just a subject not a language. At that time, I gave up on my dream as a teacher because there was no fun in it. I even hated it. It was all about getting a good score on the test.

Many years later, I am teaching English after I quit as I mentioned above because I found the fun in it again when I studied in Canada, not Korea. Korea is a great country to study English in because there are so many institutes and teachers. However, there are so many teachers who need to learn how to teach effectively and efficiently. I think teachers must see English as a language. The impacts that the teachers had on me were incredible. The teaching methods that the teachers used in the private institute when I was in elementary school made me love the language itself.

The teaching methods that the teachers used in middle school made me give up the studying itself. Since I started to pursue my dream as an English teacher, I have always thought about the impact that I will have on my students.

I have a student who was very poor at English and used to hate studying a year and a half year ago. She always had a hard time studying English. Her level was lower than anyone in school, so she was not even able to study in class. I also had a hard time teaching her because I did not know how to teach a student who were beginners’ level. I tried as many ways as possible to teach her in a fun way but she would not want to study. As time went by, rather than studying, I started to talk a lot about her and her life. I started to get to know her better. At first, I only tried to push her into studying but I got to know that it would not work at all. After I knew her ability and her level exactly, I changed my teaching plan and found a plan that fit her. As a result, she was getting better, and finally she not only got a perfect score on the final exam in the 3rd grade in middle school, but also got interested in English. Above all, she was such a shy girl because she knew that she was worse than other students. She never brought up anything about studying. She stayed at home most of her time because she was not confident about anything. Now she has totally changed her attitude about her life. She is getting confident about her life and studying especially about English. It was such an achievement that she never forgets. It was such an achievement that I never forget. I finally figured out what a teacher means. It is not the teaching skills or the knowledge of English that make a teacher a great teacher. I believe a good teacher is a person who truly understands his or her students well and believes in the students. Through her, I started to know what a teacher should do and how to teach them well. In the future, I hope I will become a good teacher.

I sometimes wonder what I will be like as a teacher in the future. A teacher who gives information about English? A teacher who has good teaching skills? A teacher who has so much knowledge of English? Probably not. I hope I will have become a teacher who can impact my students’ lives in a positive way. There are so many Koreans who are good at English. I guess they have been taught by great teachers who not only taught them well but also had special connections with them. I want to be a special teacher to the students I will teach in 10 years. I hope that my students will appreciate meeting me like the student in a story titled “A Teacher’s Story”.