

CONNECTED EDUCATION
EVERY LEADER, EVERY
TEACHER, EVERY LEARNER

BRIDGE
LINKING INNOVATORS IN EDUCATION



The Teacher as a Person



THE PERSONHOOD OF
TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM

A BRIDGE Knowledge Product



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LINKING INNOVATORS IN EDUCATION

There is an increasing awareness that the process of learning is a deeply human one, that demands an awareness of interpersonal dynamics, and immense sensitivity and people skills. If teachers are to be successful, their personhood needs to be considered in all its complexity. This document explores some of the questions and concerns surrounding the lived, human reality of teachers and their relationships with students, colleagues, and wider society.

The foundation of making classrooms a healthy and inclusive place is the attitude and approach of the teacher. Teaching does not happen in a vacuum but in a wider social context. While so-called “soft skills” have traditionally been dismissed, cultivating an awareness of the personhood of both learners and teachers, and fostering a genuine sense of compassion in the classroom is essential.

Some of the key ideas and questions we need to consider are:

- The racial and gendered identity of teachers, as well as their experiences, wounds, and traumas. This means having difficult conversations about the ways in which wider systemic inequalities and histories

of oppression impact on the teacher and learners. How do we cultivate an environment that allows for those conversations, and thus allows healing to happen?

- How do we see ourselves as teachers? If we do not trust ourselves, if we do not believe in our ability to affect change and do positive things, can we reasonably expect our learners to believe in us, or believe in themselves?
- Society impacts the classroom, but future societies are shaped in the classroom. Are we reinforcing the status quo, or building something better?

Trust in the classroom is essential

Are you defensive or open in the classroom? Remember that when you don't trust people, your behaviour towards them changes. How does that show in the classroom? In your demeanour? In your communication with learners? How does it affect your relationship with learners?

How can you show learners that you trust them? How can you show them that you see them as a person?

Another key issue to consider is that we tend to give what we receive: do we trust ourselves?

Some of the issues faced by intern and younger teachers include:

- Senior colleagues not trusting them, communication breaking down because of suspicion on their side.
- Not being seen because you're "not a colleague" - people feel they "don't need" to see you because you're "just" an intern.
- Younger teachers may be scared to bring issues up because it could be construed as starting a fight.

Senior teachers: How can you go about building trust and validation among all staff? What can you bring to the table to build trust and communication?

Some responses from aspiring teachers who were challenged to think about these questions:

"I want to be the teacher I never had."

"I want to remind students that they can, to plant a seed that will change their generations and generations to follow - I want to be a generation-changer."

"I want to be responsible for great professionals out there."

"I've realised that the only thing that's stopping me is myself."

For resources that will help you build a positive, trusting classroom environment, click [here](#) and [here](#).