

Andy Clark - Final Reflection on my DTLLS Journey.

On the BBC news this week I watched as Bill Turnbull revisited the place where his news career began, 40 years ago. He was reflecting on how it had all changed and also how quickly the time had gone.

I laughed and said to my wife that if he does a timeline of his career, I could copy it to do a timeline of my DET course, such is the amount of time it has taken for me to complete it.

I won't do that to you but it is fair to say that a lot of water has gone under the bridge since I began my epic DET journey.

Joan Patterson Associates has become Jade Solutions. The coalition Government has come and gone, as have the Lib Dems apparently. My organisation has restructured, not consolidated the restructure, restructured again and then done it all again...currently restructuring.

Wars have ended and started again, whilst fresh wars have blighted the earth and are on going. We have had an Olympic Games with another due this year in Rio.

My 25th wedding anniversary has come and gone as has my 50th birthday. My normal colour hair gets greyer by the week but at least it hasn't fallen out. I have also acquired a number of new nieces and nephews but, thankfully (touch wood) no grandchildren.

Suffice to say that this course has taken an embarrassingly long time for me to complete and yet here I am, seemingly at the end.

The one constant I have always been able to rely on, in a world of change, has been the support and backing of Anne McGrath; a wonderful and very tolerant teacher. Anne is encouraging even when annoyed and a bit exasperated by your lack of perceived effort and motivation and always makes you feel like you can do it, even when you want to throw in the towel.

Up front I would like to thank her personally for not giving up on me; for sending prompting emails, even when they either never gained a quick reply, or the reply was full of well intentioned but generally misguided promises to say the least.

Whatever the outcome of my final assessment. I know that ultimately it was down to me to do the work, but feeling that Anne cared and wanted me to finish come what may, has been a big help in getting me over the line.

I have learned a lot during the course. Not least about learner motivation. You see, as I have reflected previously, I am intrinsically a lazy person...to put it politely. I am capable, more capable than I believed to be honest, but I do lack the organisation and sometimes the will to just get things done! In truth, this applies across my whole life. The best way to motivate me to be honest is to annoy me. I have got some of my best work done in life when I am annoyed.

The thing is, in my head, when you take an academic course and add an extremely busy job and home life, you have a recipe for academic apathy where, when faced with a choice of do it or don't do it...don't do it was always going to win - until there was no choice...and then I did it. Each assignment, each bit of reading, each journal, each bit of applying what I have learned to my work has been worth it and has given me a real sense of achievement. So would it be different if I did it all again? Do you know, I don't think it would; which is shocking really.

So I have to accept that as far as learning goes, I am what I am, and I have to be responsive to that.

And there ladies and gentlemen is one of the biggest things I have learned; not only as a trainer but also as a parent. Being responsive to how people operate, whilst being genuine and encouraging; believing that in time a person will find their own way, with a little support, and achieve what they are capable of.

This, I believe has been applied to me, and I apply it particularly to my children (at least they were children when I started :-)). I have come to like this arguably humanistic style. I certainly have an increased level of patience – supporting their journey and being there when they make mistakes, rather than trying to dictate what they should and shouldn't do.

As well as this personal learning, I have of course learned so much about the teaching profession; what my value set is; what good practice might look like and how do you balance this with organisational demands.

This is tricky and can be both invigorating and demoralising at times. I have a mantra which states that 'it is better to get things right than quick'. Unfortunately, this seems to be continually at odds with my organisation. This has led to many a lively debate and the DET course has given me so much precious knowledge and insight to be able to fight my corner effectively.

I have also grown so much personally; gaining a greater understanding of where I stand for helping people to be the best they can be, whilst being aware of my own limitations. Where I have gained confidence and credibility with regards to my job and where, despite the amount of time it has taken; I am extremely grateful to have done the DET course.

It has value, gravitas and the way it is delivered sets a terrific example of how things should be done. Most of all it has been highly responsive - especially to an old and lazy superficial learner like me and I cannot thank you enough.

Best wishes to you for the future 😊