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## For the love of teaching: Why three graduates decided to become teachers



From left: Violet Maluleke, Thobeka Mngadi and Simphiwe Ndlovu.

Photo: Robyn Walker/UCT

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This World Teachers Day, 5 October, three graduates of the University of Cape Town (UCT) one-year [Post Graduate Certificate in Education \(PGCE\)](#) shared what inspired them to become teachers after following different paths.

Teaching was not Simphiwe Ndlovu's first choice, he said, sitting alongside fellow PGCE students, Violet Maluleke and Thobeka Mngadi.

Instead, he had graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Applied Geology from the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

"In matric I didn't know what I wanted to do," he said. "People always advise you to do what you enjoy. I loved geography so I researched jobs in the field, came across geology, and applied to do that.

"But during my three years at UWC I also worked as a tutor, and I realised I was much happier teaching than in the field. I was happier working with other people. After I graduated, I applied for the PGCE straight away."

"It is amazing how many students discover a love of teaching through tutoring" said Dr René Toerien of Rondebosch Boys' High School's Physical Sciences department, and professional development unit where Ndlovu is doing the practical element of his PGCE.

Maluleke, who has a Bachelor of Science in Microbiology and Biochemistry from the University of Venda and a year's internship experience in a chemistry lab at the Vaal University of Technology, agreed.

"At first I loved working with microbes and being in the lab, but that changed," said Maluleke. "At the time I used to help children with their homework and I realised that I was really able to help with their deeper understanding and that I would make a great teacher.

"My love for children and teaching has made me develop a passion for it. I love working around kids; the environment does it for me. I love explaining things, standing in front and teaching them," she said, adding that natural and physical sciences are her favourite subjects.

Mngadi, on the other hand, has come to teaching via an interest in psychology, fuelled by watching a documentary while in matric on how psychologists, who'd discussed their cases on film, were able to help people.

Now a graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, Geography and Politics from UWC, she said: "It was while busy with my degree that I realised that as much as I loved psychology, my real interest was in child psychology and educational psychology, and working with kids, how better to prepare for this than getting experience as a teacher? Her ultimate goal is to obtain a master's in educational psychology.

In becoming a teacher there were a few surprises for the three graduates. "You have to do a lot of talking; 50 minutes is a long time," quipped Ndlovu. "You really have to come prepared and plan your lessons ahead of stepping into the classroom."

This is where the semester spent in the lecture halls of the PGCE pays off, added Ndlovu. Graduates were taught everything from lesson planning, to timing a lesson, discipline, classroom management and the writing of test and exam questions, theory that the student teachers have had to apply during their practical experience.

"Sometimes your teaching style works, and sometimes you have to rethink," said Maluleke. While Mngadi shared: "What surprised me most is that you are a mother and counsellor before anything else. You need to be emotionally prepared. Kids come to class with different emotional burdens and you need to be prepared to put them at ease, so they forget what is going on elsewhere".

All three student teachers see themselves building a career in education. Maluleke wants to promote inclusivity in schools and the understanding of diversity, that every learner has a different way of learning. Mngadi dreams of being the best teacher she can be, helping her students excel academically and being there for them, while promoting mental health in schools. And Ndlovu shared that he feels as if he has come home and would one day like to be a school principal.

The PGCE is the only qualification that allows graduates with degrees other than a Bachelor of Education, professional registration with the South African Council for Educators and access to a high school teaching career.

*Story by Lisa Templeton/UCT News*

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