**Why Teach?**

As I write this, snow is falling. Students are busy finishing their linocut projects, expertly guided by their teacher. Since moving to Moscow a couple of months ago, I have taken on a new role of Assistant Art Teacher. At my previous school in St. Petersburg, I was *the* art teacher. But that school had to close, as students migrated away from the tense political situation that is Russia. I had to retool and adapt if I was to remain employed in the country. My current job offers me the opportunity to take a back seat in the teaching process. Here I assist several teachers across visual arts, product design and digital design. And while the new role is humbling, it allows me to witness expert teachers at their craft. From this vantage point, I see there is much I still need to do in order to improve my teaching practice and rejoin their ranks.

A key to realizing this goal is acquiring an iQTS. I have over 15 years of teaching experience at the university level. However, this is not the same thing as teaching younger students. Some things are universal: qualities such as patience, awareness of the classroom dynamic, and using different approaches to presenting information, for example. However, the pedagogy at the lower levels differs in other ways. These students need more guidance on *how* to learn, in addition to acquiring content. There is more record keeping. And curriculum development is more global. The subject needs to be arranged not only to support a logical progression, but needs to fit in with school timetables, and national, or as in the case of my IB school, international guidelines.

**Teaching Philosophy**

My ever-evolving teaching philosophy addresses several aspects of education, however, at its core it is student-centered. My dad, who was a teacher for over 20 years, gave me valuable advice: you have to meet the students half-way. You can’t blindly force your own agenda. This means getting to know the students, in order to relate their interests to the curriculum. It also means encouraging student agency when appropriate. Giving students choices empowers them and teaches them to take responsibility for their education.

I am passionate about art; therefore, my teaching philosophy involves conveying that passion to my students. It has been said that teaching is explaining the same thing in a variety of ways. I believe that students learn best through diverse approaches. It is also incumbent for the teacher to be creative in how the material is presented.

Consistency is important to students' well being. The classroom management plan should be clear and transparent. This contributes to a feeling of security for the student, which is essential in order to unlock one’s creative potential. Teacher expectations need to be realistic, but challenging. Rubrics are helpful tools for teachers to ensure that grading is objective; and for students to help focus their efforts on relevant information.

As a lifelong learner, I continue to stay informed about contemporary trends in both art and education. I value professional development and work to incorporate proven strategies into my teaching practice.

Finally, building in time for reflecting on the efficacy of my teaching, as well as students reflecting on their work, is a necessary and important part of the process to encourage growth and improvement.

**Personal Strengths**

One of my strengths as an educator is patience. As an art student and professional artist, I have often struggled to find creative form for my ideas, so I can empathize with students who are also trying to find their creative voice. It is sometimes jokingly said, albeit derisively, that if you can’t do it, you teach it. Meaning, if you were more competent, you would not have to resort to being a teacher as a profession. There may be some truth to this in some cases! But I actually see this as a positive. Those who struggle to understand something, fully appreciate what others may go through, and have the necessary patience to guide their students. And perhaps they, rather than the stars, make the best teachers.

Of course, a teacher also needs to have mastery of the subject. Having made, thought about, and taught art for over 20 years, I feel that I have slowly but surely gained a wealth of knowledge that I can in turn pass on to my students, to help them succeed in an arts career.

**Summary**

As a creative professional, earning an iQTS would help further my career in an international school environment. The University of Sunderland offers me the flexibility that I need in order to continue my education whilst working abroad. More than any other profession I’ve tried, being an educator allows me to combine my passion for art with meaningful interactions with faculty and students. Above all else, this is why I seek teacher certification.