



"My teacher is good. She knows everything!"

"Indian women of my age tend not to be very well educated, it's simply not part of our culture," explains Champa Shah, a mother of two from Wembley.

Champa married at 16, had two very handsome sons and concentrated on providing a beautiful home for her family. In common with many other women from a wide range of backgrounds, the expectation from her wider family was that a nice home and family would be satisfying enough.

But two years ago, Champa, actively supported by her husband and sons, decided to go back to school – to get a grasp of the basics in English and maths. With Gujarati as her first language, she is a fluent English speaker, but by her own admission struggles to understand even the most basic written instructions.

"I didn't want my children to be ashamed of me," she states, quite simply. "I wanted to be able to manage for myself. Having a good, patient teacher has made all the difference to me. She knows everything! In our class she is able to help students with lots of different questions, from Britain's political system, to London's history to the right way to deal with a housing problem.

"I really want to study now. Not to degree level or anything, but to be good enough at English to get a part-time job when the boys are at school. That way I can broaden my experience of England and make new friends – I'm not confident enough at the moment but I'm working hard enough to make sure I can do it in the future."

Champa's determination has already helped her pass her driving test – after sitting her theory exam four times. "My sons are very proud of me now," Champa smiles. "When they get back from school, they ask if I have any homework and then sit down and help me. And my husband is very supportive too, because he knows that learning makes me happy. There are still many women from my background who are stuck at home because of a lack of basic skills. But learning will open up my world."

Wini Miller **Teacher** at college of North West London

Case study 2

“Search deep inside your soul for your motivation. And don’t underestimate the effect you will have on lives.”



When you meet Wini Miller, you’re immediately struck by the stunning combination of her infectious enthusiasm and natural empathy.

In past career-lives, she’s been a carpentry teacher, tutor in DIY and maintenance for young mums and worked in adventure play. So it was unlikely she was ever going to teach English and maths in a dry, traditional manner.

Wini now teaches on a range of courses around sites for the College of North West London, embedding both sets of skills in activities for students from a cosmopolitan range of backgrounds. Which means she has to be culturally aware. And pretty inventive.

“We do a lot of ‘culture searching’ at the beginning, to establish possible agendas, areas of interest and areas of conflict,” she explained. “And now I’m going to say something contradictory.

“Preparation and planning are vital – you need to go into a room with a fixed idea of what you’re going to do.

And then you need to be prepared to be completely flexible about that plan – to explore those initial concepts with students, to bring things alive and to elaborate – that’s a really important part of the franchise.

“I used to really hate computers – but once I discovered how they can open up the world and help me to share it with students I got completely addicted. It’s a vital resource for me now.

“When you’re teaching adults and young adults it’s a completely different relationship. They want to learn and you need to realise the impact you can have on their whole lives. People will identify with you and take you as a role model. It’s up to you to be a good one.”