I’m sitting in a café in Barcelona...

I’m reading a book called The Element by Ken Robinson. On a table nearby, a few teenagers are chatting with their friends after a long day at school. ‘Our task is to educate (our students’) whole being so they can face the future,’ I read. ‘We may not see the future, but they will and our job is to help them make something of it.’ I look at the kids and think: ‘That’s quite a big task!’

It’s a challenge we all face, whether we’re teachers, parents, educational writers or youth workers. Our short-term objectives may be different: we may help children pass school-leaving exams, understand maths formulae, or take part in community projects. But ultimately our long-term objectives are the same: to help children develop a passion for and curiosity about life, to give them confidence in their own ideas, to help them become open-minded, global citizens.

When I started writing insight I immediately understood that the course was trying to satisfy these two objectives: a rigorous syllabus would help students develop their language skills and guarantee exam success. But it also had its eye on long-term objectives too.

Today’s students are very sophisticated. They have an amazing ability to multi-task, and they often have a broad knowledge of other cultures and countries. They also have a point of view, and in insight we value that and seek it out – we also challenge it. We constantly ask students to question, evaluate and make cross-cultural comparisons: What do you think? Do you agree? What would you do? Speaking helps develop their confidence as language learners, but it also develops confidence in their own opinions and beliefs.

In insight we’ve added a special ingredient too: in many texts and topics there is a fact or point of view students may not have come across before, something surprising or thought-provoking, something they may want to tell their friends in a café after school. The aim of this extra ingredient is to inspire curiosity, and a passion to discover and learn. It might help them think about an issue in a different way, and make a lesson more memorable.

That’s what insight is all about. It strives to create the right conditions for students to grow, learn and develop their ideas and experience. To become lifelong learners. ‘You cannot predict the outcome of human development,’ adds Ken Robinson, wisely. ‘All you can do is like a farmer create the conditions under which it will begin to flourish.’

Jayne Wildman

insight author