

# Minor Details, Major Impact

**Saadia Asher**

**I am a teacher,**

**Happy, friendly and kind,**

**Daughter of a teacher mother,**

**I can never leave the students behind.**

I stepped into the field of teaching thirteen years ago. I was confident that I had all the skills of a teacher as I was born in a family of teachers. My mother and aunts belong to the same profession and it helped me to learn informally from them. (Or at least so I thought) I could hear their teacher-talk while discussing their schools, sharing how a new strategy they applied worked in their classroom. I also liked to play games like “Teacher Teacher” with my younger siblings and cousins. All these things were adding to my resource pool! This motivated me to adopt my family female profession. I thought I was all set for this.

I started as a pre-nursery teacher, with the little ones in my class. This was their first ever school and first experience of separation from parents especially their mummies. Along with taking care of their academic growth, I had to nurture their emotional needs too.

The settling down stage of the children went quite smoothly. Children started falling into the routine of the school.

I was trying my best. I thought I was doing a good enough job, until...

Three months after the start of the new session, Aneela became unsettled and gradually stopped attending school. I tried to find out the reason from her mother but she did not give me a clear enough answer. "She starts crying as soon as she enters the school gate," the mother said to me. Her innocent cry used to upset me and make my heart pound. Aneela's weeping affected other children in class too, who would also become restless. I decided to call the parents again to discuss the issue. As soon as I started to speak, the father cut me short saying,

"How can I send my child to a school where the teacher never smiles?"

His comment said everything to me. He pushed me in an abyss of self-doubt. I felt I had made a big mistake by entering into this profession. I thought that I was neglecting the needs of these little children entrusted to my care.

Aneela's father's comment helped me to change myself as a teacher. Today whatever success I have achieved as a teacher is due to that little girl who helped me to realize that the way I was teaching in the beginning was not right. From then onwards, I started teaching them in a Fun-to-Learn manner, smiling and laughing with the children, sharing jokes with them, allowing them to see me not just as their teacher but also as a motherly figure in the absence of their own mothers.

I had entered the profession thinking I knew enough to get by. I couldn't have been farther from the truth. It is the details that are hard to master and that make a world of difference. It is the missing smile that torments one child, and the harsh tone of voice that disturbs another.

My story is for teachers and also for those budding teachers. The path is not as smooth as people think when they say, “If you don’t have anything else to do, start teaching.” On the other hand, it is a wonderful and important profession.

In these thirteen years, I have tried to improve my teaching skills by learning from experience. All teachers need to step into the profession with an intention to learn throughout their career, as there is no one perfect method of teaching and there is always room for improvement in the scientific art of teaching.

*The author is a primary school teacher in Karachi.*