Some days I have to stop myself when I’m prompted to say, “When I was a student …” in response to a student request that would have seemed completely out of line 20 years ago. As academics, we find ourselves in an ever changing environment where the demand for flexibility almost requires that each of us take regular yoga classes.

We have moved from the ‘because I told you so’ paradigm to a more inclusive and engaged classroom where we partner with our students to ensure their success. Some days I think that the expectation is that the partnership requires that I do the work and the student receives the benefit, but there are some days that I really feel that I am in a collaboration with the student. In order for us to achieve this collaboration, however, has meant that our role as academics has changed considerably over the years.

Back ‘then’, being a good researcher implied that you could be a good teacher. Academics were thrust into a teaching role assuming that their PhD somehow provided them with all the necessary skills to be a good teacher. For many of us, that was simply not enough and our professional development required some form of training in the basic didactic principles of teaching and learning. Today, this is an absolute requirement for anyone interested in embarking on an academic career.

No longer is our career progression decided only by our research outputs, now, submission of a teaching portfolio is a requirement when applying for promotion. Besides the challenges we face with teaching millennials requiring some formal training in teaching and learning practices, massification of higher education also means that class sizes have increased, making navigating the teaching and learning space in pharmacy even more difficult. This, along with the struggle to keep up to date with the latest technologies available for blended learning means that being a good teacher is taking up more and more of our limited time.

Despite these challenges, being involved in the training and development of a new professional comes with a sense of accomplishment that is difficult to explain to our colleagues in other sectors. So instead of my even trying to explain it, I would encourage my colleagues in community, hospital and industrial pharmacy to get involved in the training and development of young student pharmacists.

Many of our pharmacy schools struggle to find practising pharmacists willing to mentor students during their experiential placements (another requirement of pharmacy education that adds more complexity to our roles as educators).

So my challenge to my colleagues in the other sectors is this – instead of criticising the gaps in training that you perceive in newly graduated pharmacists, contact your alma mater and pledge your support to get involved in the training of new pharmacists. After all, our student pharmacists are the future of the pharmacy profession!