

## **The impact of a Professional Doctorate - My OU and EdD Journey**

### ***Transformative Learning*     Dr Eddie Rocks**

Where I was brought up, in a small wee mining community in Fife, it was not expected that some of the boys at school would do very well. We were seen as the guys that would take up the jobs in the pits and the dockyard.

So, education was not very important to me as a young boy, nor was it really encouraged by teachers. We were certainly allowed to drift through the school.

When I left school, I went into the mining industry. And I enjoyed life in the mining industry. I enjoyed the job. I enjoyed the camaraderie.

I was eventually made redundant from the coal industry at age 30. It was a very traumatic experience. I had this idea, as a younger man, that the coal industry would be a job for life, and I really enjoyed it.

That was quite traumatic. I wanted to work. I decided that I needed to make myself more employable. And for me that meant having a really well-developed CV. So, I decided to go up to the local college and ask if somebody could help me learn how to do that stuff.

And I had a chance meeting with a social science lecturer.

And he said, you would really enjoy studying social sciences.

So, this is what introduced me to education. It was quite serendipitous.

So, I signed up. It was a national certificate-level course. So, I did that, and I went on to the university up in Dundee. And I did an honours degree in behavioural sciences. Thoroughly enjoyed it, I couldn't believe how my attitude towards education had changed as an adult, in comparison to how it had been as a lad at school.

So, once I'd completed an honours degree and my master's degree.

I started in my local college as a teacher where I'd started originally as a student. And I spent a long time there.

What could I try now? And something said to me. Why don't you go on and do the doctoral degree? So, I thought, why not? So, I signed up to do the Doctor of Education degree.

I was a very non-traditional student. I was now a teacher, who was teaching what I would have considered pretty non-traditional students.

So, it seemed quite natural to want to develop a study that looked at how non-traditional students can be transformed by the experiences of education.

I think that in choosing Open University to do a doctoral study, I really believe that I made the right choice. OU was an absolutely fantastic experience. I could try all night to find fault, but I'll not find a fault.

My supervisor the main supervisor, and he was just fantastic. It made whole experience of studying at that level really exciting, and really very dynamic.

It's quite a big undertaking, doing a doctoral degree. You can't really afford to lose that motivation. And I was motivated through it and I was supported.

My interest, enthusiasm and motivation never really waned. And I don't know if that's-- I think that's partly my work ethic, but I think it's in large part Open University. I think the way the degree was set up, you always had deadlines and targets, and it just kept you-- I don't know if other people lose interest or drift away. I never did.

One of the real benefits I felt that I had from participating in the doctoral degree was... I was really taught how to access and how to use good evidence for constructing arguments and counter arguments and highlighting certain caveats of received knowledge.

I was able to pass that on. And I spent quite a bit of time passing that on to my own students.

Probably based a lot on my own experience, I believe students could get a lot more out of education than just getting a qualification and getting a passport to work. I want education to change the way the students see themselves and their place in the world and build their confidence and build them their sense of agency, if you like.

So, the classroom-- this was a learning classroom in the sense there are no individuals in my classroom. It's a we, a we classroom.

And the seminars were constituted by what I called collaborative learning groups. So, four or five students would support each other through the learning process. They would read key papers and would discuss the key papers and help each other understand the key papers. Then we'd share that understanding. We'd meet and share it with the rest of the class.

My real goal for the experience of education, for the student, as an educator, participation in education should be life changing. And it should be irreversible. The people who complete our program should never be the same people again. It should change them irreversibly.