

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

### ***'Not just for a man, Mother'* - Professor Hazel Reid**

I went to a junior school in Surrey. Where when it came to the 11 plus, the pass bar for going to grammar school was very high.

So, I didn't pass my 11 plus. I went to a modern secondary girl's school.

I was in the grammar stream, but when it came to the age of 15, it was my decision to leave school and not stay and take GCEs.

So, my decision to leave school at 15 was quite surprising, in many ways. I had two older brothers, who both went to grammar school. And my mother said, well, that's OK, you can leave at 15 if you wish to.

I expect, you'll be married by the time you're 18. I wasn't. It was also surprising actually because she was the principal of an adult education centre.

So, I became a GPO telephonist.

Shortly afterwards, while I was working for Boots, I then took a range of GCEs, having done English literature, I then branched out and did other subjects. And it was because I enjoyed doing the work, and it was not for any career purpose. It was really developing enjoyment in learning, I guess.

I then started to do A levels.

And it was the A level that got me interested in thinking about that at degree level. By then, I was married. I had a very supportive partner, and so, who encouraged me.

And I then thought that the OU would be good. I had one child, at that point. So, it fitted in. The OU fitted in with studying and raising a family, and I also enjoyed it. I became very good at stirring a saucepan and reading a book, at the same time. So, the structure of the OU, I enjoy it.

So, my degree, my honours degree was with the OU in sociology. Near the end of the degree, I then started to think about a new career using the degree. So, I investigated that and then applied for, and completed a postgraduate diploma in career counselling.

I then worked for a career service and thought about, what could I do next to continue in learning?

And so, I applied and was given a place-- this was part-time-- on a master's in psychology, and the area of focus was in career guidance and counselling. So that linked very much with the work I was doing, at the time. The higher education institution I was working in was a specific institution, training people for career counselling.

And in time, that became part of the university, which I then moved to, with my colleagues. Working then for a bigger, higher education institution and becoming more involved in writing and research. Then a doctorate seemed like the next step.

And I can remember talking to my mother about it, at the time, and she'd always been, despite what when I was 15, she'd always been very interested and, I guess, proud in what I'd been doing in terms of education, as an adult. And when she said to me, so after a masters then, what would you do next?

So, I said, well, I guess the next step would be doing a doctorate. And her response was oh, well, that would be all right for a man. So that might have been some of the impetus for also deciding that I would do a doctorate as well.

My institution funded the doctorate. I chose the OU because I was familiar with the OU, and I liked the OU, I liked the structure and the EdD, to me, looked like a good way of taking this in a way that was supportive.

I knew it would be hard work, but I also knew that the materials and the experience would be a good one. The topic was very linked to my professional life as a career counsellor, but also to the development of my career within higher education.

I also in terms of my experience with the OU, had excellent supervision.

And indeed, I modelled my own supervision of EdD and PhD students at my university on the type of supervision that I received, so it was hard, it was challenging, It was all embracing in terms of time. I don't think I read a novel for probably six years.

However, for me, it was a very good experience, again, supported by my institution, but also supported by family. I could lock myself in a room and study, write, think, all day. When I would come down at 6 o'clock, children would be fed, chairs would be upright. All would be well.

In terms of achieving a EdD and working full-time and having a family, a horse, a dog, and a cat, I think, you need many things. You need to be obviously committed to your studies. You need to choose something that fascinates you, interests you, enthuses you.

What else do you need? You need to be resilient. You need to be very well organized. You need to be inspired, I think, and to have faith that you can do this in stages. You can do it in chunks, you can develop your ability to become an expert in the subject that you're studying.

And at the end of that, you are the expert.

And then, of course, being closely linked to my professional life and research that I was doing at the time, in any case, made it a smoother journey. I wouldn't say easier necessarily, but certainly smoother.

working for a doctorate and then having a doctorate, it gives you a status, I guess, that helps that. It was also within the university important as a university that had gained status to run its own doctoral programs.

It was important that they had members of staff who had doctorates.

So, it was important in terms of the development of a professional career within the university. It enhanced the ability to progress to both reader and then professor later. But also, in terms of the career counselling sector, it meant I got invited to do things.

It also helps, of course, a publishing career, and it helped enormously in terms of a number of European funded projects, and to be invited to participate and be on the board, leading with others, some of those projects. So, without question, the doctorate enabled me to do that, to develop that.

When I think back on the development of my education, that I didn't do a degree or pre-degree qualifications in what, you might call, the normal route is, I find it quite difficult when once somebody referred to me as an adult learner, because in fact, I think, I learned an awful lot leaving school at 15.

So, my final school report at age 15 said if Hazel put as much effort into her studies as she does into making people laugh, she would go far, but, as it stands. I don't think she will amount to much, academically, which is an interesting thing to say to any child of 15.

It was, in fact, the final quote I used in my professorial inaugural lecture, and I finished with so who's the professor then?

So, the doctorate has been something that is important in terms of a professional career, a higher education career, but also, personally, it's an achievement that goes with you. And it's one, for me, that has been highly significant and enjoyable, and I enjoyed doing it. Hard work, but I really enjoyed doing it.