

Transcript

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SPEAKERS

Kathy Chandler, Fiona Aubrey-Smith

Fiona Aubrey-Smith 00:15

Kathy, you're very kindly going to be sharing with us some insights from your own doctoral journey in relation to that. I wonder to start us off, perhaps you could just very briefly share with us your research topic, and tell us a little bit about your your doctorate.

Kathy Chandler 00:32

Okay. Hi, Fiona. So my research topic was the looking at the synchronous online tutorial experiences that students were having in my own context, which at the time was health and social care. So I did a narrative study, and I was hearing students stories, and I used a voice centred relational method to analyse those narratives.

Fiona Aubrey-Smith 01:06

Thank you so much. And we'd like to really unpack and explore a couple of specific aspects of your doctoral journey. And one of those just to start us off, it'd be really great to understand a little bit about what changed for you as a result of undertaking a professional doctorate.

Kathy Chandler 01:25

So, yeah, there have been changes in different ways a lot has changed for me personally. Before I started the doctor, I'd been working as an associate lecturer at the OU for many, many years. Yeah, close to probably 18 at the time. So I wish I'd known about the EdD a lot earlier than I did. I wish I'd done it many years ago. And what's changed for me personally, is I've learned a lot. I've connected with other researchers, both within the OU and without, I've gained a lot more confidence in my subject area and in how to research. And I use the learning from my doctoral research to make a successful application for senior fellowship of advanced he. And the week before my viva, I accepted the offer of a one year secondment to the Institute of Educational Technology at the OU, I don't think any of that would have happened without the EdD, in terms of what has changed in practice, the advantages of doing professional doctorate were that the findings of my study were immediately applicable to my teaching, I could use them in my own practice. And the design of my study and how I involved colleagues meant that my findings were shared with them and discussed with those colleagues as as I went along. And examples from my study have been used within staff development materials at the OU. And I've been able to disseminate them more widely through conferences and journals. And because I was looking at a topic, synchronous online learning, which was particularly relevant during

the the last few years, you know, with all universities having to do the majority of their teaching online because of COVID. There was a lot of interest, a lot more interest than I expected in, in my my research topic, in terms of what's changed in terms of policy? Not much, I would say. But my studies identified how the university could do things differently to improved students experiences. And you know, that research can contribute to that conversation around policy review, which, yeah, is ongoing. So I hope that eventually that there will be an impact on on policy as well.

Fiona Aubrey-Smith 04:11

That's a really fascinating aspect, in what you're just saying about the different elements of professional knowledge and professional practice, and academic knowledge and academic practice. And I wonder if we could just unpack that a little bit more. When you were amidst the research process itself? Can you talk me through any examples or scenarios where there was either complete coherence between what you knew professionally and what you knew academically or friction points of friction between those two things?

Kathy Chandler 04:46

Yeah, I think some of the time because I was so embedded in that teaching context, some of the time it was almost like that. If I knew what sort of things my interviewees were going to tell me. At other times, I got a complete surprise. Or perhaps the reasons that that came through in in the analysis were different to what I was expecting. So I was expecting students to tell me that they wished they could have tutorials, instead of having them on an ad hoc basis and meeting a different tutor each time, I was expecting them to say, you know, that that affected their relationship with their tutor, and they wish they could see the same tutor each time. But what came and that was the case for for some students. But what came through even more strongly was students where they felt that arrangement missed, they missed out on on being part of a community because they were seeing different students each time. So as a university, we'd picked up on the fact that group tuition as we do, it isn't good for the the tutor student relationship. But you know that there was an extra reason there, why we need to review that policy. And that's because students are missing out on on that support. And one thing I discovered was that the students for who that was particularly the case, were the ones that didn't have lots of people outside of the university with whom they could discuss their studies. So the ones that, you know, perhaps didn't have colleagues that they could share things with, in work, they didn't have family members who understood and had conversations with them at home. That was particularly the case for them.

Fiona Aubrey-Smith 06:58

Thank you so much, Kathy. Thank you. And can we just have a think about another aspect of your professional doctorate journey, and that's about your own identity as a researcher? And as an academic? Can you talk me through the the, the journey that your identity went on and the journey of your identity through the professional doctorate?

Kathy Chandler 07:23

Big question. So when I started the doctorate, I was an associate lecturer, and I think those of us who are associate lecturers, I mean, all of us studying an EdD, I think in my cohort felt, you know, we suffered from impostor syndrome at times. For those of us who were eight hours, I think, perhaps we struggled a little bit more than most, because as an associate lecturer, constantly being taught, told

that, you know, research isn't part of your role, it's not something you're expected to do. And I do think that affects, or it certainly affected my confidence in my ability. But having that role, I think, did give me some advantages that I perhaps didn't recognise initially. You know, I'd spent a long time giving feedback to other people on their work about their writing. And actually, that does develop your writing skills, a great deal. And also, the Yeah, so there were other people in my cohort that I had supported in studying at masters level, for example, and you know, that that meant that I was perhaps, you know, a little bit of a funny position, I suppose, you know, as as part of that that cohort. But I think being an associate lecturer, to some extent, I was, I was an insider researcher, because I had pre existing relationships with the gatekeepers for for my research. And I knew the students who took part in the initial study, it was very easy for me to enter because I had a relationship with them, I could say, you know, what do you think of this research instruments and they could help me develop that. And even the the students in the in the main study, you know, they were from other people's tutor groups, but they still knew who I was. And so, it was an advantage to, you know, to be in that professional context. In other ways, I was also an outsider because I was outside of that academic environment and coming from outside. And yeah, sort of wondering, you know, how am I seen by other doctoral students? How am I seen by the people that that are supporting me? Um, am I different because I'm an associate lecturer. And I think what developed my confidence was going to events outside of the university, interacting with other narrative researchers, other doctoral students, and realising that, you know, I could understand the conversation, I knew what we were talking about, and they didn't see me as any less of an academic than, than they were themselves. And so, yeah, that that was that was a great experience. And I think I'm, as time has gone on, the identity has changed, but I still struggle to think that I've passed that viva now and it's, you know, I still have to remind myself of that most days. It's, yeah, that's an identity B, being a doctor. It's not something that I've quite grasped yet, I don't think.

Fiona Aubrey-Smith 11:20

And yet. Dr. Chandler, you are. Yes. Thank you so much for sharing something of that journey. Yeah. It's, it's a really interesting insight into the the kind of frictions between insider and outsider. And confidence and the doctoral journey is a long journey, isn't it? It's good, a lot happens to our thinking, our identity, our understandings of different contexts, and our knowledge over that long period of time. So thank you so much, Kathy. Can we just look for our last theme of his conversation, just have a think about any top tips that you might like to share with either professional doctorate researchers who are currently immersed within their research, or for those who might be thinking about beginning the professional doctorate journey, what what top tips would you offer?

Kathy Chandler 12:17

I think for those who are just thinking about beginning the journey, I would say, do it! I wish I'd done it a long, long time ago. But I would also say that, it's, it's not straightforward. And it is like, you know, think about it like climbing a mountain. But it's one of those climbs where you think you're getting to the top, and then there's a dip that's behind that. And then you've got to sort of gather yourself and set up, set off up the next bit of the mountain. And I certainly Yeah, I expected it to be challenging, but they there were big setbacks for me that I just hadn't anticipated. And I would say, it's really important to look after your own health and well being. For me, I was determined, I was going to complete my doctoral journey in the minimum possible time because I wasn't getting any younger. And I did actually do that. But in, you know, the, the month before my viva, I spent too long at my desk, and I ended up with a frozen shoulder that I'm still recovering from. So I would say, you know, look, look after yourself, because, you

know, nobody can do that for you, you've got to have that balance and take time out to to do self care really to get away from your desk. And I would say take every opportunity to connect with other people. Talk about your ideas, what you're planning what you're thinking of doing. Because for me the ideas that I had, and some of the ideas for sort of developing methodology, or ideas about you know, how to put things together. They didn't necessarily come from other academics. Sometimes they were in conversations with friends or family members. And when you explain what you're doing to other people, and you start having to use language that everybody can understand, it becomes clearer and clearer in your mind. So I would say no take take every opportunity that you get to connect with with other people. And the final thing I would say is that no, having it's great opera Unity really, and particularly the opportunity to have someone supervise your work. And to make the most of that, that supervision opportunity. So I was very fortunate with the support that I had from from my supervisors, they were very supportive, but very challenging. And I found it helpful to make lists of questions and send them to my supervisors in advance to record the meetings that I had with my supervisors with their permission. And it's amazing, you know, when you go through a recording, how much more you pick up, about the advice that you've been given. And then you can write up the notes in much more detail. That's one advantage of having online supervision is being able to record and make those notes really, really useful. They would be my top tips. I think

Fiona Aubrey-Smith 15:58

They're great tips. I would very much support what you're just saying. They're very great tips. Dr. Chandler, Kathy, thank you so much for sharing your insights with us today are really very grateful to you. Thank you.