Researching teacher education in urban contexts (or **'West End school drop-out to East End teacher educator and researcher')** (or both with a colon?)

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Critical Issues

- In what ways do our own educational and life experiences shape the research trajectory we follow and the academic we become?
- What opportunities exist to develop our cognitive, community and organisational careers as teacher educator-researchers?

Introduction

After ten years teaching in London's East End, I finally made the decision in 2005 to become a university-based teacher educator: a decision I have never regretted. However, moving into university employment can leave many experienced former teachers like me, feeling mystified, befuddled and bemused. What was this new role? Was it essentially just teaching but with older students? Or was I now a university academic, whose main purpose should be research? In this chapter I give an account of some of the decisions I have made throughout my career, to resolve some of these questions and carve out my career path, including how I have developed my own researcherly 'habit of mind' (Tack and Vanderlinde 2014). Reflecting on this career path, I then offer some practical tips that I have found helpful in developing a career as a teacher educator and researcher. I write this through the lens of a potted autobiography, exploring the extent to which my educational and life experiences have shaped my academic work and identity. This autobiographical account is informed, in part, by the work of Laudel and Glaser (2008) who identify three interrelated careers (cognitive, community and organisational) that academics must simultaneously juggle. That said, the account that follows does not always live up to the apparent logical coherence of this short introduction. Life, in all its complexity, does not work that way.

Too much information?

Growing up with thirty-two cats, one dog, three chickens and a decidedly 'bohemian' family, in a two-bedroom flat in West London in the 1960s and early 70s, may well have nuanced my outlook on life at the time. Attending Roman Catholic primary and secondary schools (the latter an enthusiastic advocate of corporal punishment, as I can confirm through personal experience), along with the sublimely insolent and self-important Punk explosion in '76 turned nuance into complete transformation. One year later, my rejection of the mores and norms of family, religion and education was, so I thought, complete. The summer of 1977 found me at 16 years old, working full time in a supermarket by day, rehearsing and playing bass guitar in a band by night, with the bridge between the two – a few hours kip in an attic bedsit complete with single mattress, 'Baby Belling' and leaky roof – all for an extortionate weekly rent of £6. Thus began a decade of gigs supplemented by jobs in bars, warehouses, restaurants, you name it, followed by two years' backpacking in the Middle East, Asia and Eastern Europe, which was - little did I know at the time - a chance to come into contact with some of the values and lived experiences of the young people I would go on to teach in East London 15 years later. My unequivocal rejection of formal education in my early teens, was transformed in my early thirties, at break neck speed, to a love of learning, in Kentish Town's magnificent (and at times infamous) 'North London Poly' (now *London Metropolitan University*). As a mature student, with few academic qualifications, I fell in love with the social sciences, was in awe of my lecturers, and eternally grateful to a 'post '92' institution for giving me a chance to start again. In writing this chapter I now realise that so many of the values I developed during those early experiences have underpinned my career as a teacher, teacher educator and educational researcher.

An earlier career

Qualifying from London's *Institute of Education* (IoE) as a Social Studies teacher in 1995, led me to work in a diverse, urban multi-ethnic catchment area in the East End of London, initially in a comprehensive school and then in a sixth form college. Teaching, however, was never (ever!) meant to be my career. My intention was to do a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) as a stop-gap – an opportunity for me to gain a 'proper' professional qualification after completing my BA. I also thought it might give me an opportunity to get a 'real' job abroad. I certainly had no

strong desire to teach or engage with young people (me – a teacher? Nah!). All that changed within three weeks of starting my PGCE. I'd chosen a secondary PGCE course, however, as secondary student teachers, we had a one-week placement in a primary school, to help us understand pupil transitions. Mine was near Elephant and Castle in South London. I remember the first day going into the school feeling slightly anxious and very much an outsider, but once there, enthralled by the intoxicating cocktail of creativity and spontaneity displayed by teachers and pupils alike. By day three, 'morning sir' greeted me on entering the playground and I was bowled over (literally at times) by those children and by a level of trust and warmth they showed me that I'd never encountered within my own primary education. By day five I wanted to become a primary school teacher.

But while I was certainly tempted to shift training phases, I remained on my original PGCE and trained as a secondary-school teacher in Newham, East London. Part of that training included a weekly one-day placement at a sixth form college. This opportunity was a thrilling one, not only because of my growing desire to work with young people in this part of London but also because it was a superbly funded college in the heart of one of the most economically deprived areas of the country. The college had only been open since the early 1990s making it a jewel in an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage. An opportunity for a fulltime position as an A level Politics teacher arose. Suited and booted, I attended the interview but although they offered the post to another applicant, they asked me if I would be up for teaching Sociology and Business Studies – after all, my PGCE was in Social Studies. Of course, I responded with an excited 'yes'. One, ever so slight, problem with accepting that first teaching job was that (apart from a total of four sociology lectures during my BA in European Studies), I knew absolutely nothing about sociology. This meant that throughout my NQT year, I was constantly armed with an early edition of Haralambos and Holborn's magnificent 'Sociology – Themes and Perspectives', and was just one chapter ahead of my A level students.

Over the years that followed I was fortunate to be employed in an institution in which I was able to request resources, training and other benefits for my students and be confident that these requests would be greeted with an enthusiastic 'yes'. At the time, I did not realise how significant this would be, when researching the professional

development of teachers within my own and other national education systems. It was only in my second year of teaching, when studying for my Masters in the sociology of education (a much needed boost to subject knowledge), that I slowly realised that many of the managerial policies and values adopted by the college were, in part at least, policies and values that were being written about critically by other academics at the time (e.g. Ball, 1999; Clarke et al, 2000; Sachs, 2001). Restructuring was a fairly frequent event[1]; per-capita funding mechanisms meant rises in class numbers; performance-related pay was gradually introduced into appraisal systems; increasingly de-motivated staff complained about more meetings, more paperwork and increasingly disruptive students.

And yet, while I was certainly aware of these issues, my own experiences of teaching at that institution imbued me with a pathological optimism and determination to teach students from backgrounds where, in many cases, formal education was not part of their family heritage. I could also, albeit under very different biographical circumstances, identify with many of the difficulties young people experienced in their own formal education. My hunger for new ideas on how to teach these young people drew me into combining teaching with mentoring trainee teachers. The seeds of becoming a teacher educator were rapidly being sewn. With serendipity a constant companion, then and now, these experiences led me, over the next few years whilst a full-time teacher, to write articles for A level sociology students, subject textbooks, teaching resources, and my own PhD.

With a little help from my friends

Looking back now on my teaching career, I owe so many people a 'thank you' (including the editor of this book series) and in this chapter I have, I hope, a chance, to put some of that gratitude in writing.   Dr Warren Kidd (author, outstanding educator and Best Man at my wedding) taught sociology with me at Newham Sixth Form College. As a fledgling teacher in my second year of teaching, he encouraged me to engage in two separate activities that were to fundamentally inform my future professional trajectory. The first was to invite me to co-write an article with him for an A level sociology magazine (the 'Sociology Review'). To write with another

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[1] Three major restructuring processes took place in the nine years I was employed at the college.

colleague is not always an easy process but Warren provided a template, encouragement, criticality and endless patience. During this early writing apprenticeship, I learnt much about writing for 16-18 year olds in terms of the need to break down complex ideas into digestible bite-sized chunks while keeping your reader aware of the golden thread of argument. Years later I was criticised, by one of my university employers, for still devoting time to writing an A level publication (as opposed to something, presumably, more 'Ivory Tower'). My response then (and now) was to draw attention to the fact that, at the time, Professor Stephen Ball, amongst many other well-known academics, also wrote for that publication, inspiring a future generation of sociology students along the way. Years later, Stephen offered to supervise my PhD at King's in London. I asked him then about why he still wrote for teenagers. With one of his characteristically dry smiles he replied "because I enjoy it – and because *all* writing is important in terms of developing your own ideas". Advice I have never forgotten.

The second activity informing my future trajectory was to join a subject association (the *Association for Teachers of Social Sciences* or 'ATSS'). The networking and professional learning I experienced with the ATSS was phenomenal. In those early years of teaching I was given the opportunity to facilitate workshops around the country for other, often more experienced, teachers; write for the association's journal; and join its executive board with some of the most creative, passionate, social science teachers and teacher educators I've ever worked with (e.g. Alison Kirton, Tony Lawson, Mark Kirby and Tony Breslin to name a few). The advice, guidance and inspiration I gained from these and other ATSS colleagues was invaluable in making me a better teacher. I was, at the time however, completely unaware of how important this and other professional networks would be for my own professional development.

From teaching teenagers to teaching adults

Those who know me well, recognise that the cloak of imposter syndrome (Clance and Imes 1978) weighs heavily upon my shoulders, in part no doubt, a product of my early life. Despite numerous attempts to shake off that mantel, I rather suspect it will cocoon me, shroud like, to my eventual coffin. But there are times when it temporarily slips unseen from my shoulders. Like in those early years in Newham

and Tower Hamlets, teaching those amazing young people growing up in, often, extraordinary circumstances and realising, finally, that I was a good teacher. Their courage, their humour, their tenacity (often in situations of phenomenal economic deprivation) are why I chose to embed myself in East London – as a teacher, teacher educator, researcher and resident.

But those early years spent teaching young people were also years spent mentoring PGCE student teachers, during their teaching placements. A dual identity was rapidly being forged, as both teacher, or to use Murray's (2002) expression 'first-order practitioner', and as teacher educator; a 'second-order practitioner' identity. This second identity was to be bolstered with a part-time PhD in comparative education and the realisation that I really wanted to work in a university. A trajectory that was to take shape with the help of those friends and networks mentioned earlier – but also through a relentless desire to gain new teaching experience, this time in teaching adults. So between 2003 and 2005 I was teaching for the Open University in the evenings, while my days were spent rushing between London Metropolitan University, the University of Northampton, the IoE, and the College of North East London, while also still teaching A level Sociology part-time in a school in Hertfordshire. But it was those evenings with my Open University students, that are as precious to me in their own way today as those earlier days spent teaching Newham teenagers. That particular course - an introduction to the social sciences- attracted young and old alike, mainly with few or no formal qualifications. An 'exotic dancer', a convicted former drug dealer, a priest, mechanics, shop keepers, single mums (and one dad) and a retired GP – were just some of the characters that made up those cold winter evening sessions and some of the warmest professional memories I carry to this day.

In search of an identity

If choosing to study my Masters was, at the time, to make up for an embarrassingly large deficit in my subject knowledge when teaching A level Sociology, then my reasons for embarking on a PhD were very different. Intellectual curiosity, including an appetite to travel, fuelled the desire to carry out comparative research looking at the professional development of teachers, their values and identities. By now the topics of identity and professional development were sewn into the fabric of an

emerging third identity; that of a becoming-researcher and I was fortunate enough to gain a part-time scholarship at King's (London). I remember turning up for my supervisory sessions on Thursday evenings with excitement and trepidation - never quite knowing if I was going to be praised for the work I had submitted, or firmly (but always with warmth) sent off with my tail between my legs. But there was not one single visit to King's when I did not think how lucky I was to be engaged in this academic endeavour or, paradoxically, question whether I was capable of doing it. My doctoral journey was an exhilarating apprenticeship and I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my supervisors Professors Stephen Ball, Meg Maguire and Sharon Gewirtz. There never seemed to be any time constraints in those evening supervisory meetings, even though I knew how exceptionally busy my supervisors were. Their patience and in-depth critical feedback was exceptional. Their clarity in terms of their 'feedforward', inspirational. It was an apprenticeship - not just in how to do research – but how to supervise future doctoral students and something I have never forgotten over the years, as I've morphed from teacher, to teacher educator, to researcher and now, finally to doctoral educator (a fourth identity that I now, finally, embrace with - almost relative- ease).

Becoming an 'academic'

A member of the ATSS network I mentioned earlier, Dr Alison Kirton, was my PGCE tutor at the IoE in London. In 2005, Alison took a sabbatical and to my eternal gratitude, asked me to become acting PGCE coordinator for her Social Studies course. My identities as teacher, teacher educator and beginning-researcher, were now emerging, spaghetti-like, within a hot-pot of confusing emotions. Pride, that I was, albeit temporarily, working as a teacher educator in a university. Confusion at the realisation that, within the 'academy', status differentials between subject disciplines existed alongside distinctions often made between 'training' and 'research'. And excitement, because of the work I was doing with student teachers in their many placement schools. And I was to quickly realise that universities are, in contrast to the shops, bars, restaurants in which I had previously worked, mind-blowingly large bureaucratic organisations.

In 2006, I joined, on a permanent contract, the University of East London (UEL) as a lecturer in teacher education and remain there to this day. And now, when reading

this chapter, I realise there is a lovely inevitability in that last sentence – one that I will return to later.   At the time, I was to quickly learn that carving out a career as an 'academic' in teacher education is not a straightforward business.   For those of you who, like me, have found becoming an academic a baffling process, then please read Laudel and Gläser's (2008) wonderful article about Early Career Researchers.   It is brilliant and yet I only came across it relatively recently.   Had I read it when it was published I believe I would have understood so much more about the often serendipitous nature of professional development, why universities are such confusing places to work in, and perhaps even some of the strategies one could deploy to make the whole experience easier to navigate.   Laudel and Gläser (2008) argue that, as early career researchers (ECRs), you are not just developing one but three careers simultaneously: your *cognitive career* (i.e. the development of your research trail); your *community career* (i.e. your contribution to your wider academic communities); and your *organisational career* (i.e. the performance expectations of your employer organisation).   With the benefit of hindsight, let me explain this further by looking more closely at each 'career' in terms of my own professional trajectory.

My 'cognitive' career

I referred earlier to my writing 'apprenticeship' and how this started by writing (as I still do today) for A level sociology students and their teachers.   A series of A level sociology text books published by Heinemann followed that first article, co-written with Warren Kidd and another ATSS stalwart, the enigmatic Dave Abbot.   These textbooks were written, often in the early hours of the morning, while I was still working as a fulltime teacher and studying for my PhD. Meg Maguire, one of my supervisors, could regularly be seen rolling her eyes at me in horror saying, "Gerry not ANOTHER text book – I just want you to finish your PhD".   But in addition to writing text books, that seven-year doctoral apprenticeship, with Meg firmly at the helm, taught me to get to grips with writing whole chapters for the first time and ultimately the 80,000 word thesis. I did not realise at the time quite how significant for my career the skills I learnt through editing that thesis would become, nor what a magnificent role model Meg was as a supervisor, coach, and mentor.

After the completion of my doctorate, Meg went on to help me craft two journal articles as part of the 'mining' process that all doctoral students should be able to

achieve with their thesis. Academic generosity once again played its part and here I owe a huge debt to the IoE's Dr John Gray, who at the time, worked at UEL. John had relatively recently completed his own PhD and had landed a publishing deal with Palgrave for a book on the construction of English (Gray 2010). As I was keen to see if I might be able to get my PhD published, John supported me to write my own book proposal which was accepted for publication by Routledge/Taylor Frances. Over the years I have learnt that educational publishers invariably have lovely people working for them and with their editorial help I learnt from the commissioning editors, the skill of turning PhD thesis writing into something slightly more accessible, not least, with the whole scale editing out of my carefully crafted methodology chapter deemed 'of little interest to our readers'. Journal articles have since followed, increasingly associated with the professional development of teacher educators but also on other topics including student voice, professional doctorates and prison education, the latter of which I will touch more on later in this chapter.

But before moving onto the next 'career', I want to return to the topic of editing as a skill, and the benefits of putting together edited collections of work with, and by, other writers. A couple of years into working at UEL, I was recommended by a colleague as a potential book reviews editor for one of Sage's academic journals *Management in Education.* The experience of joining an editorial board, working with other authors, suggesting future topics for special editions of journals, working with teams of authors on edited collections of articles, and writing chapters in books, have all been invaluable parts of my academic apprenticeship. These activities have not just helped me to understand what publishers and commissioning editors look for in articles for journals, book chapters and books; they have also forged collegial friendships and networks, that in turn have fed back into the work I do at my university. One example of this work has been the creation, ten years ago, of our university-based journal *Research in Teacher Education.* I originally saw it as a way to encourage and nurture our teacher educators who, as former teachers, had for the most part never been published. Over the years, the journal has offered staff that opportunity and, in doing so, helped them amalgamate their teacher, teacher educator and emerging researcher identities.

My 'community' career

The first major academic conference I ever attended, was one held by the British Educational Research Association (BERA). New to the world of Higher Education I attended keynote lectures, seminars and poster presentations. Like an overly enthusiastic puppy, I dashed from one presentation to the next, determined to see *everything*. But that enthusiasm was also accompanied by a feeling of Lilliputian ability and experience in this strange new world in which I was barely even a peripheral participator (Lave and Wenger 1991). I had a lot to learn. For example, the people I assumed were 'book reps' at the book stalls in the main entrance to the conference, were in fact the commissioning editors and publishers for some of the biggest national and international publishing houses in education. I have, over many years, found these conversations with these colleagues at conferences so useful in helping me understand what publishers look for in book proposals but also in creating future writing opportunities.

Herminia Ibarra (2003) argues that the support and collegiality that can be provided by new mentors, new role models and new professional groups adds to the likelihood of well-being and success within different careers. I have already mentioned how, as a teacher, the experience of being part of the ATSS was invaluable. Yes, at the time it generated lots of extra work but also introduced me to new groups of teachers who, over many years, have gone on to play significant roles in education networks, including the University Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), the Chartered College of Teaching (CCT) and the British Educational Research Association (BERA). Being part of BERA has, unquestionably, been a significant aspect of my work in teacher education but also in educational research in general. Belonging to some of these networks certainly contributed hugely in the process of being elected onto BERA's council in 2012. In my first year on council, I had the opportunity to join BERA committees and get involved in many of the organisation's activities. I find it hard to say 'no' to taking on new tasks and responsibilities, but on the advice of Pat Sikes, Emeritus Professor of Education and former BERA councillor, in my first year I watched, listened and came to understand the organisation's structures, machinations and micro-politics, before getting more actively involved. This stood me in good stead in the years that followed, to take on the lead editor role of *The BERA Blog*, chair the *British Curriculum Forum* and drive the expansion of many of BERA's research awards and grants, including the launch

of the first BERA Doctoral Scholarships. As those networks have expanded, others have developed, often due to the inevitable momentum that network expansion generates. One example has been the opportunity to play a leading role in the development of the International Forum for Teacher Educator Development (InFo-TED). This pan-European group of teacher educators has been a constant source of inspiration to me and has refuelled my love of comparative research – resulting in the largest ever international survey on the professional development of teacher educators (Czerniawski et al 2017; 2018).

My 'organisational career'

When people ask me what I do for a job, my standard reply is that I 'work in a university'. Trying to unpack what that actually means, even for me, is challenging. When I started at UEL I was employed as a programme leader for the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) in humanities (a forerunner to the School Direct Teacher Training programme). As the only member of staff at the time with a doctorate, my then line-manager, asked me if I could put together a research training programme for my Initial Teacher Education (ITE) colleagues. This was a nerve-racking process, not least, because I was the new kid on the block - the upstart new member of the ITE team with his PhD. Providing research training to some of these colleagues (those who were end-of career ex-teachers whose final days in teacher education were a bridge to retirement) was, certainly, a challenge. But that challenge was made all the more rewarding by others who grasped the opportunity to engage in research for the first time. The establishment of *Research in Teacher Education,* the journal I mentioned earlier, was part of that researcher development programme. Several of those colleagues have gone on to achieve their own doctorates. To this day, one of my most enduring memories of that group of fledgling initial teacher educator/researchers was the joy and sense of achievement we shared when eight of us were invited to present some of our very early ITE research to colleagues in Bergen, Norway.

Having a PhD also meant that I was quickly asked to do some teaching on the Masters and Doctoral programmes and supervise doctoral theses. My first ever doctoral student was one of my line managers, and to this day I still apologise to him for what must have been a poor supervisory experience in so many ways. I quickly realised

that I needed a new apprenticeship but this time in all things doctoral. So over the next couple of years, I voluntarily joined committees at our Graduate School (the university department responsible for doctoral regulations and their implementation), allowing me to work with colleagues from other disciplines who ran doctorates; took on external examiner roles for professional doctorates in other institutions; and when the opportunity arose, agreed to examine as many doctoral theses as possible for other universities. Many years later, the upshot of all of this is that I now run our PhD and EdD programmes in education at our university. This has been an unexpected yet perhaps inevitable trajectory and one full of surprises. The students on our doctoral courses are mostly full-time teachers. At the time of writing, two of my doctoral students, are former A level students of mine at the sixth form college in Newham I mentioned earlier. This continuum, from pupil, to teacher, to doctoral student is, for me, made all the more significant because of my attachment to Newham, its young people and the transformatory power of formal education.

Seeking solace from a particularly stubborn bout of 'writers block', comfort came one day with a 'greasy spoon' breakfast in a local café with one of my neighbours, a Senior Lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London. She was doing voluntary work with mothers who had babies in prison. I listened, agog, to some of the stories she recounted about her work with those mothers. To my horror I realised that in all my years in education, I had not once discussed, or even thought about, prison education – a shocking indictment of me and the extent to which this vitally important sector of education is marginalised by those working in and beyond mainstream educational provision. That realisation set me off on a new research trajectory that has taken me into prisons in England, Norway, Germany and Iceland (Czerniawski 2016; 2020). There is, I think, a danger for many of us involved in initial teacher education, that we develop a myopic commitment to the work we do training and educating our teachers. This is understandable, considering the ever-increasing pressures that the job entails, not least the 'relationship maintenance' with schools (and between schools and becoming-teachers) that Ellis et al (2013) have argued is a defining characteristic of teacher educators' work. It leaves little space for other activities, including those related to research. In the case of prison education, I was lucky enough to combine ITE and research by incorporating, albeit briefly, prison education into our secondary ITE provision at UEL. For the student teachers who volunteered to take part in the

initiative, the opportunity to go regularly into a local prison, often for the first time, and teach prison learners was one of the highlights of their ITE experience. For some, it made them re-think the extent to which they wanted to be mainstream teachers or future prison educators. For others it helped them to understand the connections between formal and informal education, along with the long-term effects of school-exclusion, including its relationship to gangs and drug culture.

With the benefit of hindsight – some tips

In 2017, I was invited to give the opening keynote lecture at BERA's annual conference. The topic was early career researchers (ECRs) and the support they need in developing their careers. The tips I gave in that talk have been published elsewhere (Czerniawski 2017; 2018) but it was only in writing this chapter that I have come to fully realise the relationship between my own biography and career trajectory and this guidance. With permission from my publishers, I reproduce my twenty tips here and hope you find them useful:

1. Approach senior colleagues and directors of research throughout your university. Tell them who you are and what your research is about. Many will be unaware of exactly what work we do in education or the potential links with their own disciplines, so this could open many doors.

2. Write a blog for one of the more established blogging sites (e.g. the BERA Blog). It is an opportunity to publicise arguments, themes from research and/or published work you are engaged with. Remember, blogs are increasingly being recognised as evidence of your impact.

3. Ensure you keep your university staff webpage up to date. Don't underestimate the extent to which lobbying groups, journalists, publishers, policy-makers and others look at these.

4. Offer to review articles for journals as part of a longer-term strategy to target that publication for a future article.

5. Offer to review abstracts for academic conferences. This is a brilliant way to get to grips with the work and current thinking within your own research area.

6. Schmooze grant managers/university research funding officers in your university! Get them to know your first name. When a last minute grant comes in, with luck, they'll immediately think of you!

7. Get accepted at a conference at least once a year and ensure that you present a whole paper (rather than just PowerPoint slides) then use the critical feedback to turn it into a journal article.

8. Aim to have one article under review while writing the next.

9. Have a trusted critical friend (not an academic) read all your abstracts, introductions and conclusions. If they cannot understand those vital sections, then it's not their deficiency in understanding that's the issue – it's the clarity of your writing.

10. Widen your methodological expertise – it is too easy to stay within our own epistemological comfort zone – widening your expertise will open doors to the sorts of research collaborations you need to develop your careers.

11. Aim to have two mentors – one within and one outside your institution – both will offer invaluable expertise while widening your professional arena.

12. Access the dedicated support available in your own university that specifically targets ECRs – it is there – but institutions are not necessarily effective in signposting it.

13. At larger conferences, talk to the people behind the publishers' stands. They're usually the senior commissioning editors or senior publishers and are there to talk about your emerging research ideas with a view to future publication.

14. Try to write and publish with your mentor or other colleagues within your 'academic tribe' – generally speaking, more authors means more citations!

15. Seek out and contact ECR forums in other universities. They will be keen to hear from you – and in many cases will invite you to present your work – or even put on shared events at your or their institutions.

16. With a colleague or two, put in a proposal for a special edition of a journal. It's fun and can raise your game in terms of developing professional expertise, networks and publishing craftsmanship.

17. Exploit your doctoral thesis to the maximum - in publications, in terms of contributions to theory, practice, existing findings, methodology and policy.

18. Join any special interest group/network within your professional community (often related to annual conferences). BERA, for example, has over 30 such networks to choose from.

19. Answer emails at the end of the day rather than the beginning! That way you might just get to lunchtime having achieved some of the tasks on your to-do list.

20. Finally, write the sorts of publications you want to write, rather than those you feel you *ought* to write. I still enjoy writing for A level sociology students. All writing is good – it helps us think, create, develop, review and enhance our ideas.

In a nutshell

This chapter is, as the title suggests, about researching teacher education in urban contexts. As I said in my introduction, the biographical details I have shared with you have influenced not only my conceptualization of research, data and its analysis, but the very function of education and what it means to be an 'educator' in the first place. All research is value driven and my own values have, inevitably, influenced the research that I have undertaken in the past. The chapter, I hope, gives a little more insight into some of the values, reasons and motivations behind those endeavours. I use the word 'research' in two complementary but different senses. As teacher educators, many of us engage with research in one way or another, formally and/or informally, when we plan and prepare our teaching, presentations, reports and publications. The reading we do includes almost any form of publication that is research-informed (e.g. journal articles, textbooks, blogs, policy documentation). One can identify this preparatory scholarly activity as 'research' albeit research with a small 'r' (Murray et al, 2014). Akin to Boyer's (1990) notion of the 'scholarship of teaching', this type of research can take the form of reading to inform (and hopefully enhance) personal and professional practice. But this chapter is also about research in a second sense of the word. Far from just being consumers of research, teacher educators can generate new knowledge - research with a capital 'R'. This form of research engagement and knowledge production has been inherently linked to the improvement of teacher educators' own practice and the development of a public knowledge base for teacher education (Loughran, 2014; Tack and Vanderlinde, 2014). Being a teacher educator and engaging with big 'R' research has always been a

challenge and in recent years an endeavour that is increasingly difficult to carry out. I have been as honest as possible concerning my professional career and how various decisions and events have influenced my professional trajectory. In doing so, I hope that this chapter has given some insight into how someone in teacher education can carve out a 'research' trajectory in both senses of the word, influenced – but not limited – by their own educational and life experiences.

Critical Questions (to be sprinkled throughout chapter)

- What professional practice have you adopted (in teaching, research, networking and writing) and to what extent are these practices effective?
- What might you learn from other colleagues and how best can you accommodate their practice into your own?
- Against whose values do you examine and evaluate your own practice?
- What opportunities are there in your own institution for career support and development?
- What opportunities exist within and outside your own institution to address your professional strengths and weaknesses?
- To what extent are you fully aware of the sources of funding available to you to develop your own professional learning?
- What professional networks exist (e.g. subject associations, trade-unions, university networks, learned societies/research associations) that could support your career development?
- To what extent could you benefit from methodological knowledge development?

Reflections on Critical Issues

Ever-increasing workloads, lack of time and in some cases lack of confidence are all significant barriers for many teacher educators who seek opportunities to carry out research. The tips I have offered in this chapter, I hope, help you find ways to create opportunities and time to develop your researcherly 'habit of mind' (Tack and Vanderlinde 2014). Moving into university employment for the first time can leave

many people, including former experienced teachers, feeling insecure about the expectations of their performance as novice university employees (van Helzen et al 2011). Laudel and Glaser's (2008) conceptualisation of not one, but three careers (the 'cognitive', the 'community' and the 'organisational') has really helped me, as a teacher educator, to understand what it means to be 'an academic' and the many different forms 'being an academic' can take. Both authors argue that the nature of those three careers, and the fact that much of the work that goes into the development of a 'community career' rather than directly associated with the employer organization – accounts for why many academics feel 'decoupled' from their employer organization. I hope that by reading this autobiographical account I've provided a way of understanding how to navigate all three of your teacher educator careers to the benefit of you, your learners and your employer organisation.

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