

Navigating the Doctoral Journey

The School of Education and Communities University of East London Doctoral Conference
 Postdoctoral Narrative - Life After Passing - Dr Arlene P Weekes



"I am aware that I am a slim, black, heterosexual, with an invisible disability. I have never drunk or smoked. I am a practising Christian, businesswoman and own my own home. My social status has changed from working-class to middle-class. Alongside my marital status: married, divorced, remarried and now widow. My second husband had a life-threatening health issue which he struggles to manage. I have raised children as part of a couple, as a single person, and have been a stepmother. I was raised by a single mother has three siblings from my mother and five from my father, (the latter I have never met) and haven't had contact with my father for 30 + years. I list as many identities as possible to give you a picture of who I am.



Research Interest

Why the interest in decision-making concerning alternative families for children?

Is it my:

- African Caribbean heritage which is steeped in the legacy of slavery?
- love of history especially the memory of the television series Roots, which highlighted the fact that slave master split up slave families, separating husbands and wives, parents and children?
- childhood memory of my mother telling of her life pre- in the Caribbean living temporarily with her childless godparents, or other families helped each other out by looking after the children of neighbours?
- own experience of being cared for by my older cousins between 5 to 9 years old? My mother was a working single parent in the mid-1960s. I lived with them and their sons so I could access school?
- ex-husband, having been privately fostered in 1970s by white working-class woman, in a predominately white area where he experienced abuse from the carer's older daughter? Resulting in adult trauma and depression?
- stepmother in-law's experience, of fostering in the USA. Or my UK friends who fostered or adopted?
- personal experience, of being assessed as a foster carer, having been persuaded by a social work colleague of who was a single foster carer? During the assessment I realise after hearing about excrement smeared on the walls. Once approved and having had no placement, I asked to be de-registered as I knew I didn't have what it took?
- role as a social work manager in leaving care working with teenagers and a service manager for fostering and adoption, witnessing placement breakdowns or difficulties in matching children?
- Christian faith that recognises the importance of taking care of children, through Bible verses such as:

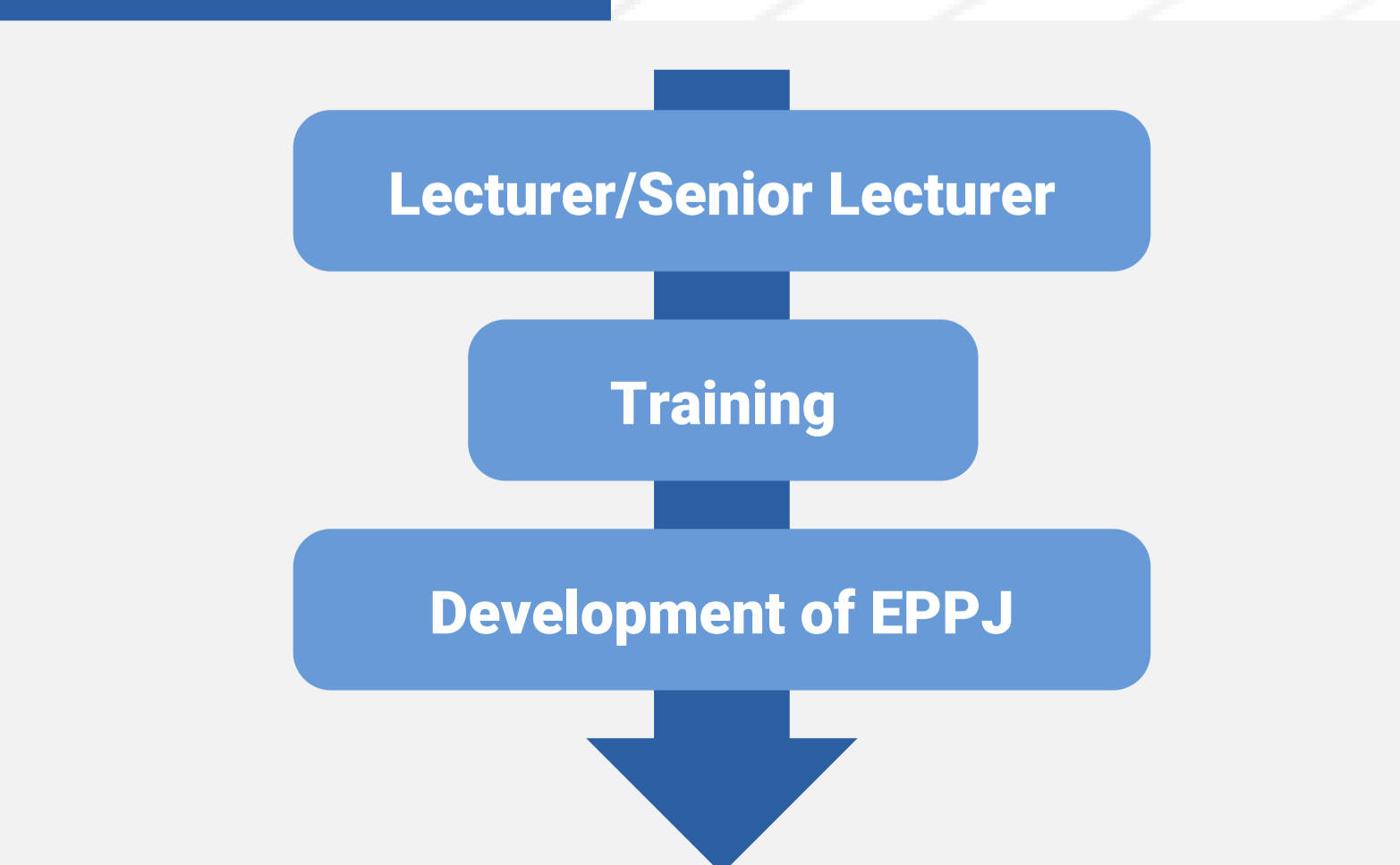
"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,God sets the lonely in families," (Psalm 68:5-6)

"Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. (Exodus 22:22-23)

Career History



Career Change



PhD Research Journey

My PhD journey was stop and start, fortunately for me in the early days there was no pressure of exam boards saying there was only X number of years to finish. All told from start to finish it took 18 years, akin to having a third child.

Two degrees later, whilst studying for the PhD I was diagnosed with dyslexia, which explained why I initially struggled with writers like Bion and Wengraf. However, their theories I grew to love and use for my thesis.

Like being a parenting, there were years as a PhD student I entered uncharted waters, and had no idea what I was doing, and wanted to throw in the towel. Personally and professional life continued my children completed school and went off to university, I changed jobs several times and became a carer to my husband who later died. However, encouragement from friends and my faith kept me going.

"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."
2 Peter 3:8-9.

And then came, the COVID-19 pandemic,

which allowed me the space to finish as there was nothing left to distract me! However, the pandemic meant I had to wait awhile for my viva to be organised. I prepared for that by watching webinars and attended the Doctorate Hub's virtual seminars. The viva was everything it should be, a conversation with two interested examiners, I passed with minor amendments.

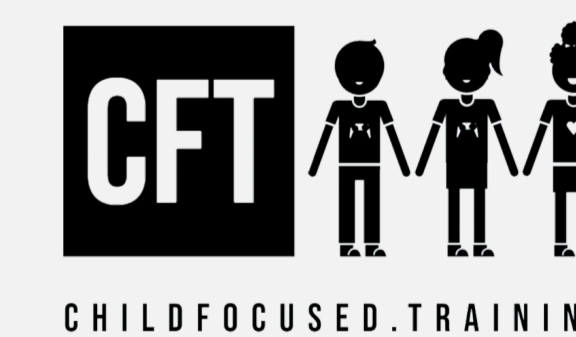


Adapted from Zaveri, E et al. (2021) World Bank Publications [Image] shows a perfect example of ebb and flow.

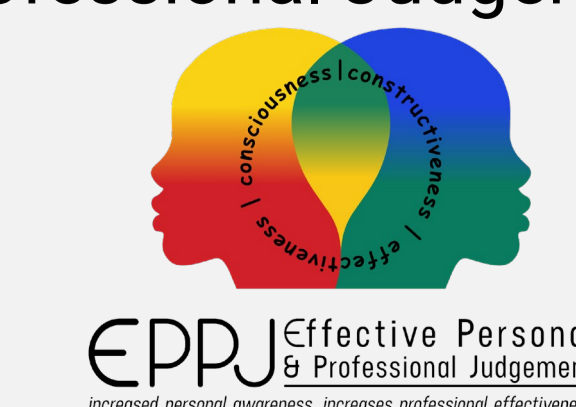
Next Steps/What Next?

Setting up of two companies

- Child Focus Training (CFT)



- Effective Personal and Professional Judgement (EPPJ)



Developments

EPPJ Psychometric tool

Constructiveness

Self awareness of personal attitudes, beliefs and values

Use of biography in performing role / task

Individuals who are self-aware but do not put that knowledge into practice. These individuals could be trained to use their experiences more effectively.	Individuals are sufficiently aware of themselves to make an effective contribution as an individual. These individuals know what they are doing and tend to do it.
Individuals who have pockets of self-knowledge but do not use the knowledge effectively. These individuals have unregulated emotions states and thought patterns that can impair their effectiveness.	Individuals do not demonstrate high self-awareness but have professional competence to be effective in role. These individuals can be supported and trained to bring their self to the task.