

# Apprise Timeline of MIKE

Mike worked for many years as an administrator for educational programmes in a North American university. His work involved international work and he began a PhD in the same Canadian university where he worked since he felt the degree would give him greater legitimacy in working with the international partners. He intended to work full-time while doing the degree part-time. He joined the Canadian study in the fifth year of his PhD and graduated several years later when he was 41. He and his partner had children during the time he was in the study. What struck us about Mike's story was:

Managing childcare  
(personal)

Lack of thesis progress and managing  
full-time work while doing a PhD  
(work experience)

Did PhD to gain legitimacy in position and  
after PhD, wanted to change jobs due to  
poor climate but financially not possible  
(career thinking)

Year	Personal	Work experience	Career Thinking
PhD Year 5 (part-time)	Had 1st baby with his partner, another PhD student; needed to balance share of childcare alongside work and study.	Worked on PhD proposal. Supervisor brilliant, but Mike responsible for calling meetings, yet put these off; ashamed at lack of progress.	Continued full-time work; without the PhD felt 'discounted'.
PhD Year 6 (part-time)	Experienced financial difficulties; partner understanding since also doing PhD. Continued childcare sharing.	Completed comprehensive exam (1). Sacrificed participation in wider academic life to progress PhD. Needed stronger structure and more supportive committee to complete.	Remained in current job; hoped for research and teaching after graduation. Took leave from work.
PhD Year 7 (part-time)	Had second child; partner completed PhD.	Up against university deadline; external motivation to finish. Only way to finish was to do PhD full-time; otherwise throwing away all the years of work.	Arranged nearly year's leave of absence to work on thesis; granted since study related to his work.
PhD Year 8 (part-time)	Looked forward to spending time with family, enjoying the summer-	On leave, wrote thesis; sought out supervisor more and got wanted help. Completed degree.	Directorship of unit came up, but didn't apply since felt without PhD wouldn't be considered.
Post-PhD Year 1	---	Struggled to get back into routine after leave. Felt excluded due to changes made by new director during his absence.	Regretted not applying for directorship.
Post-PhD Year 2	Third child on the way.	Did not have good relationship with Director. No longer encouraged to do research or international work, things he enjoyed.	Considered seeking another position, but decided against since he needed security.
Post-PhD Year 3	Took parental leave for third child. Needed to stay at same institution to 'repay' leave.	Still in same position but not happy.	Actively seeking other administrative positions in other departments; potentially could lead to a demotion. Worried that PhD getting stale; he had missed the boat.
What struck us	Managing childcare.	Lack of thesis progress. Managing full-time work and doing PhD.	Did PhD to gain legitimacy in position. After PhD, wanted to change jobs due to poor climate but financially not possible.

(1) Comprehensive exams (demonstrating depth and breadth of knowledge) are a required element of most North American PhDs. They must be completed successfully before doing a thesis proposal defense (which is similar to a transfer of status).