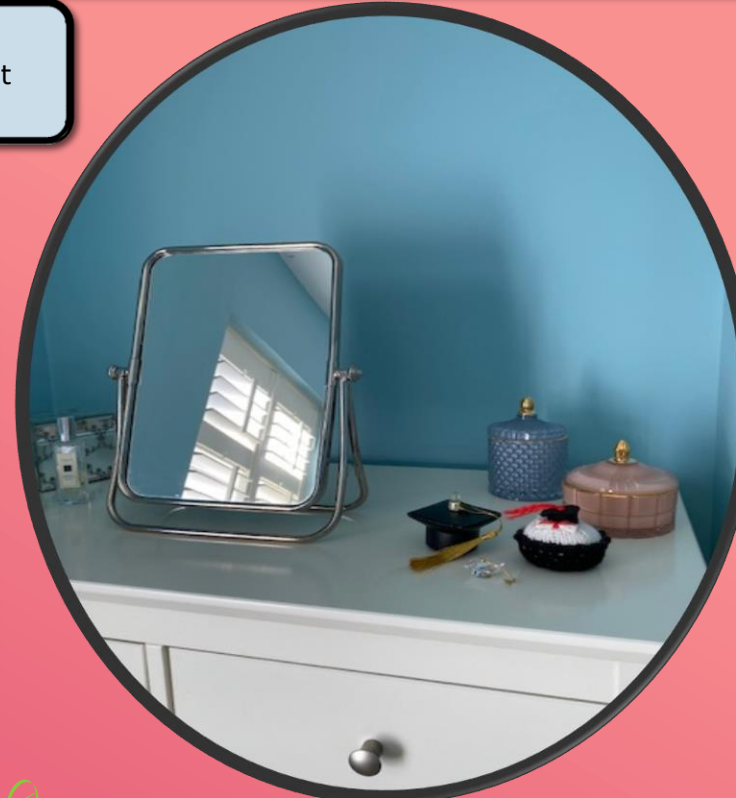


Aim

To evaluate the participation of a postgraduate taught student in an ongoing research project

Background

Postgraduate taught students in the UK face many challenges when returning to study. These include lack of confidence in their own knowledge and skills which may create anxiety (Bamber, Choudhary, Hislop & Lane 2017) and have a negative impact on their learning experience (Coneyworth, Jessop, Maden & White, 2020). Tobbell et al (2010) argue that there is often an assumption that the postgraduate student possesses expert knowledge due to prior experiences which may contrast with the students' own perceptions. Therefore, to address and support the development and acquisition of student knowledge it is important to explore and understand the student's experience so that the curriculum can be enhanced and improved. This is particularly relevant when providing research education to postgraduate students as this will enhance future career aspirations (Daniel, 2016) and the provision of evidence-based care in practice. To develop this understanding, the current study examined a postgraduate's student experience of participating in an ongoing research project. The research project was aligned to the student's research topic that they explored during the level 7 research modules. This case study facilitate a nuanced understanding of the students experience which can be used to inform the curriculum in the future.



"This is my dressing table...its got 3 little graduation hats on it...I left school with no qualifications...when I look at those 3 little hats I think of my journey...each little hat gave me confidence....to develop more knowledge and skills....."

Design & Methods

- Mixed Methods: Semi-Structured Interview and Photo-elicitation.
- The participant for this case study was a postgraduate taught student who had successfully completed their dissertation module.
- The participant provided a photograph prior to the semi-structured interview which represented their experiences and perceptions of participating in the research project. The participant had the opportunity to discuss this photograph in the semi-structured interview which informed the emergent conversation
- This creative methods approach was utilised as this can portray the lived experience of the participant in a form that other forms of social sciences research inquiry cannot (Washington & Moxley 2015).
- The photograph was key in illustrating participant experiences and provided further rich data for the case study.



Key Literature Cited:

- Bamber, V., Choudhary, C. J., Hislop, J., & Lane, J. (2017). Postgraduate taught students and preparedness for Master's level study: Polishing the facets of the Master's diamond. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 43: 236-250.
- Coneyworth L., Jessop R., Maden P., White G., (2020). The Overlooked cohort? Improving the taught postgraduate experience in higher education *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 57(3): 262-273.
- Daniel B., (2016). *Big Data and Learning Analytics in Higher Education: Current Theory and Practice*. New York: Springer.
- Tobbell, J., O'Donnell, V., & Zammit, M. (2010). Exploring the transition to postgraduate study: Shifting identities in interaction with communities, practice, and participation. *British Educational Research Journal* 36: 261-278.
- Washington O., Moxley D.P., (2013). Self-efficacy as a unifying construct in nursing-social work collaboration with vulnerable populations *Nursing Inquiry* 20(1): 42-50.

Findings

Thematic analysis was used to identify the following 2 overarching themes

IMPACT of LEARNING

Intellectual Wellbeing

"I've been able to look at research in a different way and rather than being frightened of it...its quite exciting because you're doing that investigationyou're looking a bit more in depth at the topic..."

Non Validation

"I mean its sad its not recognised.....there hasn't been an opportunity to disseminate my knowledgeI'm not sure whether I'm alone in that as a post grad student...its an area that needs to be worked on..."

Workplace Environment

Development Opportunities

"I am thrilled about being part of this [the research team].....I'm looking forward to some of the openings that it might create for myself..."

Leadership

"being part of the research team... has supported me...the gains that I've got rather than being from my employer.....are from being part of this project..."

Discussion & Implications for Postgraduate Taught Education

Participation in living research, as part of a collaborative team, has the potential to nurture students' confidence in their own abilities to generate new knowledge which can inform the development of care. The workplace needs to be invested in this journey with a leadership style which values the contribution that participation can make to care delivery, whilst providing a platform for dissemination to the wider clinical team and opportunities for career development.

Taught postgraduate programmes should consider ways they can enhance students collaborative working within their research modules and consider innovative assessment opportunities to reflect this.