McGuire-Snieckus, R., Markopoulos, G., Coombs, M., Stevens, D., Vitale, A. and Wainwright, E. (2014) Differences between placement and non-placement students: a mixed methods approach. *BPS (British Psychological Society) Mathematical, Statistical and Computing Psychology Section: Scientific Meeting*. Keele University, Keele, UK. 13 December 2014.

ResearchSPAce

Differences between placement and non-placement students: A mixed methods approach

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Initial inspiration...

Avon & Somerset Constabulary

NHS Royal United Hospital Bath

Sirona Care & Health

Circle

Placements: Why bother?

- Are they just a CV enhancing exercise?
  - Lowden et al. (2011) "*Graduates tended to value the extra-curricular experiences at university and work experience more highly than their degree's content… seeing these as adding to their CVs and helping to secure employment*".

    <u>However</u>, according to Taylor (1988) placements can lead to:

1. Greater crystallization of self-concept and work values
2. Smaller 'reality shock'
3. Better employment opportunities

Placements: Why bother?

- Reddy & Moores (2006):
  - Placement students (N=414) achieved higher grades in their final year (See also Binder et al., in press).
  - Placement students (N=45) received higher ratings from their dissertation supervisors (N=13) on skills and other attributes.
  - Focus group analyses showed that students viewed placements as desirable and beneficial.
  - Up to two years after graduation, placement students were more likely to be on track or in their desired career.

Aims

- Expand on previous studies by:
  - Relying more on self-report measures.
  - Collecting longitudinal data (pre- and post-placement, before/after graduation).
  - Employing mixed methods.
  - Including interesting between-group comparisons to help infer causality (placed students **vs** non-placed students who wanted a placement **vs** non-placed students who did not want a placement)

Design

- ## Time 1 (pre-placement)
  - Career Aspiration scale (Gray & O'Brien, 2007)
  - Employability Skills checklist (Reddy & Moores, 2006)
  - Trait Hope scale (Snyder, 1991)
  - Self-Perceived Employability scale (Rothwell et al., 2009)
  - Career Decision Self-Efficacy scale - SF (Betz, Klein & Taylor, 1996)

- ## Time 2 (post-placement)
  - Same as Time 1

- ## Time 3 and 4 (post graduation)
  - Reddy & Moores (1999) Graduation Questionnaire

- Focus groups will be conducted at all stages.

- Quantitative analysis will involve a MANOVA with Placement (3 levels) and Time (Time 1 vs Time 2) as factors.

Preliminary findings

- Quantitative:

  – Recruitment rate has been exceptionally low (N=46).

    Placed: n=13
    Non-placed / want: n=27
    Non-placed / do not want: n=6

  – However, scales are all moderately correlated, suggesting MANOVA may be appropriate.

    Lowest: Car Asp * Self-Perc Employ (r=.12, N=46, NS)
    Highest: Self-Eff * Skills Check (r=.80, N=46, Sig)

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	Placement	Mean	SD	N
Self-Perceived Employability	Have	43.38	4.874	13
	Wish	43.48	5.309	27
	No	43.17	4.262	6
	Total	43.41	4.965	46
Trait Hope	Have	52.08	4.051	13
	Wish	50.26	7.857	27
	No	54.50	8.735	6
	Total	51.33	7.121	46
Skills Checklist	Have	229.38	16.591	13
	Wish	217.44	20.642	27
	No	211.17	44.714	6
	Total	220.00	24.115	46
Career_Dec_Self_Eff	Have	88.62	7.922	13
	Wish	79.15	13.518	27
	No	76.17	29.721	6
	Total	81.43	15.563	46
Career Aspiration	Have	33.23	3.609	13
	Wish	30.63	5.175	27
	No	29.67	4.676	6
	Total	31.24	4.804	46

Preliminary findings: Qualitative data

- 2 focus groups
- 1 hour semi-structured discussion
- One group who had secured a **placement**
- One group with **no placement**
- Analysed using Inductive Thematic Analysis
- Preliminary analysis revealed 5 main issues which arose in both groups, each subdivided into clustered of subthemes….
- ….and one surprising theme which occurred in just the non-placement group.
- Just the main highlights presented here today

Theme 1: The value of placements

… I want to go into the media but I'm not 100% sure, maybe advertisement or television, but in my mind it could be so different to what the reality is so having a placement and being around people who are doing it and that's their 9 to 5 days, it's like 'real' it's like 'ah, yes, I actually do want to do that' instead of what I may think it is (non-placement student)

… with this it's not a whole year out of it and you're not, you don't have to just do one thing, you can volunteer to different places throughout the year… (placement student)

…it shows that you're willing, that you want something, you're going to go out and do it unlike other people perhaps that just go to uni and don't think about doing other stuff. It just shows that we do something out of our time. (placement student)

Theme 2: Reasons for doing/not doing placements

Confidence, my confidence was really low last year so I wasn't interested, if there was a bit more like ..it is quite difficult … how to portray myself in a positive light for it… (non-placement student)

.. especially having something like a placement to say "I'm not new to this, I've done something like this before" …and in interviews and stuff, if they ask "Oh, give us an example of something that you have done", you can go into experiences that you have had with the patients and stuff….(placement student)

Theme 3: Responsibility for placements

…I think communication is a big thing about the placement. I know last year I started hearing about placements and I didn't know how people had found out about them. I wasn't particularly interested in doing them, but I was like 'Umm, where was that?....'

….I didn't know much either, I was more word of mouth wasn't it? (2 non-placement students)

…there was so much pressure to do placements and volunteering so I found this opportunity quite good. The university really put pressure and get students to try and look for placements…

I feel like it (information) was given to us, kind of just straight out, Rebecca was constantly emailing us, she really helped us (2 placement students)

Theme 4: Problems in securing a placement

Trying to fit everything in...you had to do every Saturday, every Wednesday night for whatever it was, one night a week and a Saturday for about 12 weeks before you could then start the placement, and then you have to commit to a year, which I thought was quite full-on... maybe if that was a little more flexible....(non-placement student)

Theme 5: The 'ideal' placement

…I mean if the placement was like in this (specific local) area and it was available on the days that you were in Uni and say it was only an extra hour or two I think people would be able to? (non-placement student)

Something from each module would be good. Something related to cognitive, criminological, and biological. All of them. Different settings. Prison, hospital, charity… (placement student)

Theme 6: The particular needs of mature students

Yeah, but also I do have a lot of work experience as well, I would feel a bit selfish taking off a younger person who doesn't have any experience …like year I didn't want to apply I thought like all those 19 year olds never had a job before and I've got loads of experience, it's like it's their turn? (non-placement student)

Preliminary conclusions

- Considering this is a long-term project, we need to adopt more aggressive recruitment strategies to ensure power and account for attrition (while attempting to have roughly equal cell sizes).

- Early analysis of the qualitative data indicate that the mixed methods approach can add to our understanding of this domain by revealing issues which had not been suggested by earlier research, and thus indicate different inroads into improving the placement experience for diverse student populations

- Suggestions?

Thank you for your attention and for what I am certain will be very useful feedback!