

Enhancing Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being: The Impact of Practice-based Research

Introduction to this special issue

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This collection of posters papers, a webinar and extended abstracts was originally part of a joint symposium between the UK Council for Graduate Education and Middlesex University taking place at Middlesex University on 21st May 2020. The joint event between the UKCGE and Middlesex University was cancelled because of the pandemic yet it is now even more relevant and situationally tied to current circumstances. Some of the abstracts, posters and papers intended for the symposium appear here, in this special edition of the Work based Learning e-journal

With approximately 450 million people worldwide now living with a mental health issue, our collective well-being is one of the most pressing concerns of our time. Scholars and practitioners from a variety of disciplines are examining what needs to occur to enhance emotional well-being at national and global levels and there are exciting opportunities for professional doctorates to exert a significant influence in shaping the knowledge-base and practices of this challenging field.

Professional Doctorates are uniquely primed to undertake research in this area. Doctorates in clinical psychology, counselling psychology and psychotherapy are already helping create a brighter future for those who live with emotional difficulty whilst others with a broader

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remit, such as doctorates in education and doctorates in professional studies, are exploring areas that include the contribution of coaching to emotional well-being and interventions for young people. But can we do more? And if so what?

The symposium intended to bring together speakers from a range of disciplines and organisations to explore the topic of emotional well-being and mental health and to consider the contribution that is being made by those undertaking professional doctorates, and those who deliver them. We now do this in the form of this publication. In addition to examples of current research, the publication explores the curriculum, methodologies and supervisory devices that might be particularly helpful for nurturing high impact research and how doctoral pathways can lead to real-world change.

The panel discussion on Enhancing Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being for Students and Staff brought together three individuals talking from varying perspectives. Lucy Holland, vice-President of the Middlesex student union talked from the students' perspectives (including their time during lockdown) and represented the students' point of view with great foresight and experience. Anca Alba from Mental Health Support Service King's College London brought the perspective of staff who support students in their mental health and well-being. Carl Lyons works with staff at Middlesex running sessions to enable well-being for staff across the university and brought a staff perspective. The session facilitated by Professor Sarah Corrie brought about in-depth discussion on the issues and available support for students and staff. Watching and listening to this is a compelling experience.

The poster case studies of doctoral students who are undertaking work in this field will be included digitally on the UKCGE website amongst a collection of impact case studies (see <http://www.ukcge.ac.uk/events/icpd-impact-posters.aspx>). Posters came from researchers across Middlesex University who are researching in the areas of mental health and well-being. Shirley Allen's work is on how early years teachers may recognise children's mental health issues at an early stage. Nicky Lambert's post doc work recognises and celebrates the personal changes generated by doctoral programmes are equivalent to more traditional outputs. Karen Manville, shows the impact of canine assisted intervention on reducing anxiety, stress and depression. Herbert Mwebe monitors cardiovascular disease risk in people with serious mental illness and bridges a gap for these patients and their physical

healthcare. Jane Obi-Udejaja explores the impact on practice when service users are involved in staff training on the prevention and management of violence and aggression in local NHS mental health inpatient wards.

Then Anca Alba's contribution complements her contribution to the webinar with her preamble on how an integrated approach to supporting students' mental health would allow separate systems and levels of support to connect, communicate and work together to support the student at all levels including academic, pastoral and specialist support level.

The final two contributions are extended abstracts from our two keynote speakers. Vanja Orlans discusses a DCPsych programme and highlights its potential in making a difference to professional, organisational, or social practice, especially the reflexive practice of the researching professionals themselves. She argues that the DCPsych is professional doctorate that enables contextual change. action and useful intervention as a part of the doctoral frame.

David Lane considers the supervision of experienced practitioners who undertake professional doctorates. He notes that there has been increasing interest in how practice is viewed not in terms of individual competence but as part of socio-material practices in the context in which they occur. The idea of considering practices in this way indicates how the practices which inform supervision may also be defined.

This special edition and the planning for the symposium is co-ordinated and facilitated by

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