

Undergraduate Therapeutic Radiography: Perceptions on Curricula Delivery and Preparedness for Practice using an Appreciative Inquiry Approach

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Abstract

This qualitative study used appreciative inquiry (AI) to explore educational experiences that students and graduates found conducive to learning for the role of a therapeutic radiographer. Participants were final year students on a three-year undergraduate programme from one University and graduates from three radiotherapy departments in England. Data collection involved focus groups and interviews; data was analysed using thematic analysis with reference to learning principles and theories. Ethical approval was granted by NHS Trust Research Departments and the Research Ethics Committee at Buckinghamshire New University. Data acquired during the *discovery* and *dream* stages of AI indicated that active authentic teaching in academia, such as simulation, is useful prior to placement, particularly when peer and reflective learning processes are employed. Emotions and skills acquisition associated with peer learning should be explicit and advertised as part of the learner journey. Placement learning embodied socio-cultural processes facilitating acceptance into the placement culture and environment. Students were seen to form relationships with patients, peers and practitioners, yet, learning afforded from the groups differed significantly. Patients engendered feelings of worth giving impetus to learning. Supervisors and mentors who portrayed professional values and student empathy, formed positive relationships with students and empowered learning. The effects of practitioner role-modelling should not be underestimated as this was instrumental in the development of learners' professional identity, professionalism and competence. A no-blame culture, positive attitude and behaviour encouraged learning as did learner self-regulation and a positive mindset. Elective placements broadened students' minds, engendering critical thinking and aspiration. Negative and positive emotions have key roles to play in empowered learning. Participants' comments were used to create a framework of educational activities that they believed empowered learning, however, further study into treatment planning education is necessary.