

A practitioner perspective on the Research Process

And use of digital technologies

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CDI Research Conference 24th Feb, 2022

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A bit about me and my journey so far...



BUMPING ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUMS IN A SOCIAL MEDIA AGE (“IYKWIM”)

Exploring the impact of career focused online discussion forums in supporting the career learning and development of Open University students

A HECSU funded research project
Leigh Fowkes | Careers & Employability Consultant | The Open University

2019 – The impact of online discussion forums

YOU’VE GOT MAIL!


Exploring student and practitioner experiences of the value of email and telephone careers guidance

Leigh Fowkes, Lynne Johnson, Lydia Lauder

A HECSU FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECT

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY CAREERS & EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES

MAY 2021



2021 – The value of email and telephone guidance (undertaken with two colleagues)



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The Impact of Career Focused Online Discussion Forums

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53379/cjd.2021.141>

Keywords: online discussion forum, career learning, career identity, community inquiry, higher education

ABSTRACT

This mixed method research project investigated the impact and utility of online discussion forums (ODFs) hosted by the The Open University (OU) Careers and Employability Services in supporting the career identity, learning and development of Open University students. Despite a substantial evidence base underpinning the use of ODFs within online learning environments for pedagogical applications there is a paucity of scholarly activity linking student participation within ODFs for specific career learning and career development purposes. In addressing this gap, this novel research draws upon influential career theory relating to career learning and career identity to situate student and staff perceptions of careers focussed ODFs and their impact. To achieve this the interactions of higher education students were analysed within six selected ODFs whilst more in-depth insights were captured through student questionnaires and staff interviews. The findings of this study demonstrate the wide-ranging benefits of ODFs for the growth of career identity and learning, and also as a space where critical community inquiry can occur, contributing to deeper approaches to learning for participants.

POP
FIGURE 1
TABLE 1
TABLE 2
TABLE 3

PUBLISHED
2021-08-10

HOW TO CITE

Fowkes, L. (2021). The Impact of Career Focused Online Discussion Forums. *Canadian Journal of Career Development*, 20(2), 61-68. <https://doi.org/10.53379/cjd.2021.141>

More Citation Formats

2021 - Journal article: The impact of career focused online discussion forums

2022.....

Journal article based on “You’ve got mail” research

The research process – the worst part is getting started

Insert
motivational
“first step is the
hardest” quote
here



Imposter syndrome – it can be hard feeling the odd one out...

The biggest challenges – What would Bear say?

Am I ready?

How to decide what to research?

What does a good research plan/bid look like?

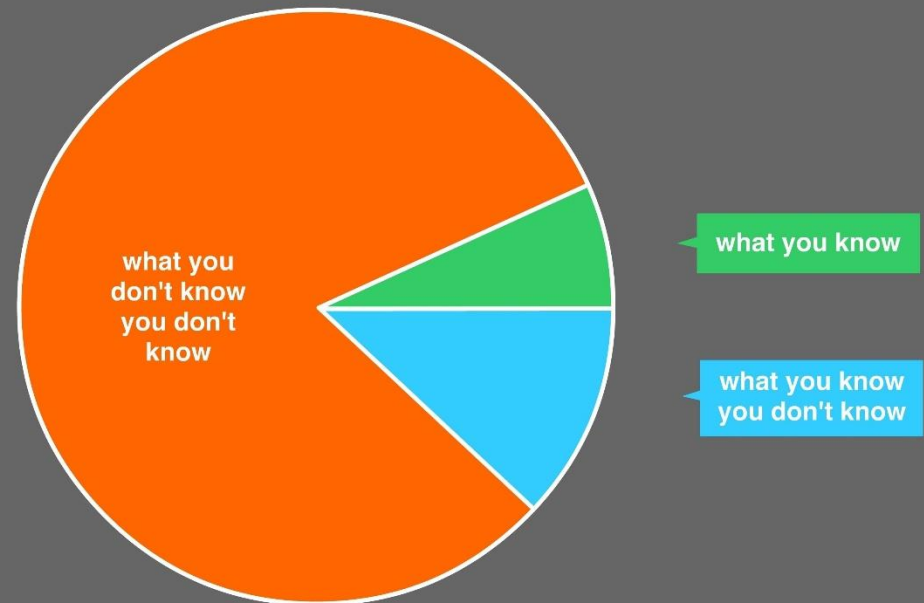
What methods should I use?

What digital tools will help me?

Where can I get support?

What if things go wrong (e.g. not enough data).

Do I have to learn as I go?



Beware of Imposter Pac-Man

So how did I approach these important questions?

Am I ready?

How to decide what to research?

What does a good research plan/bid look like?

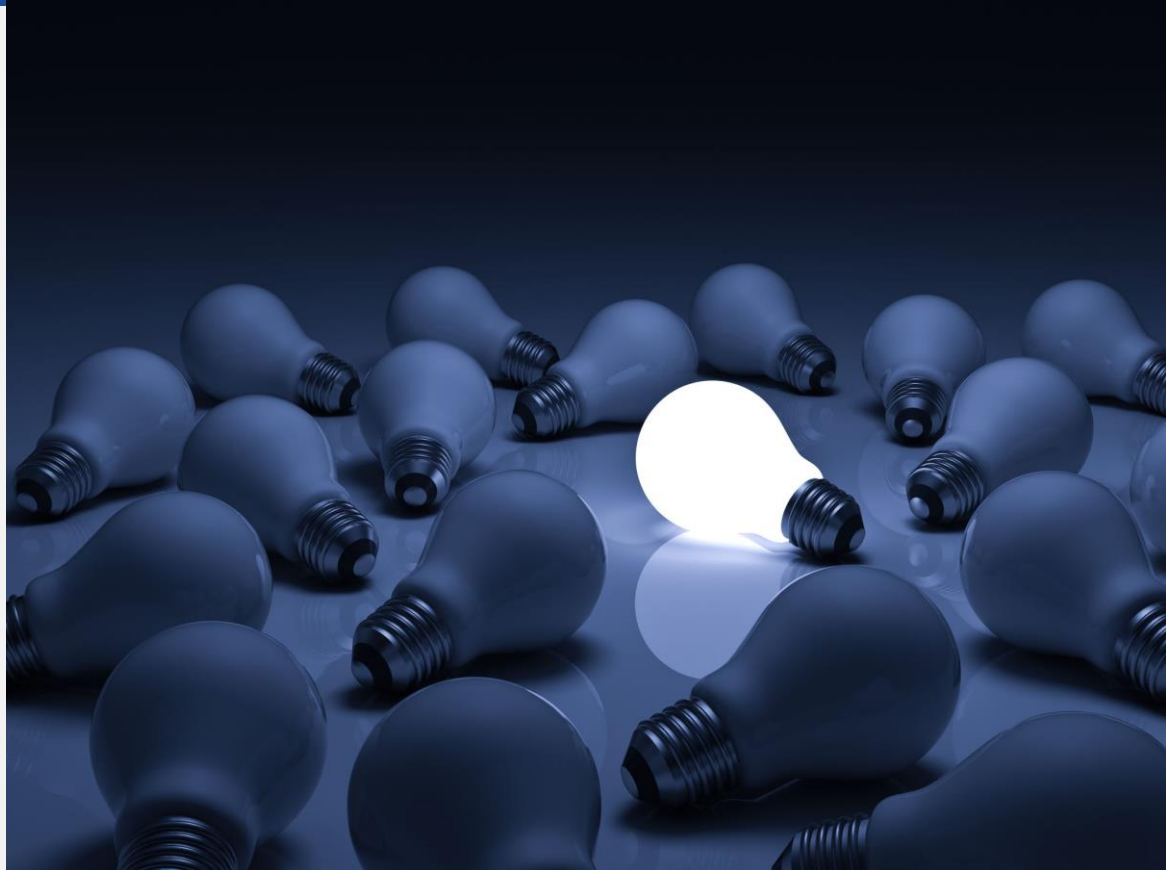
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Quick case study example: A reliance on digital technology

I used a self-completed structured **Jisc online questionnaire**. I needed to learn the package (online guides, videos, colleagues) and then user test questionnaires. I struggled to get the data.

I employed qualitative description inc coding framework of Open University student and career practitioner posts across six Careers & Employment Service hosted **online discussion forums (ODFs)**. I didn't get permission from all forum participants.

Thematic analysis of **semi-structured interviews (online via Adobe Connect)** undertaken with a sample of OU Careers & Employability Consultants. I had too much data!



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The poster features a blue background with the Open University logo in the top right. The title is in large white letters. Below the title is a paragraph of text. At the bottom is a photograph of several hands interacting with a whiteboard. The whiteboard has the word 'FORUM' written in large black letters, with 'DISCUSSION', 'SOLUTION', and 'SUPPORT' written below it. There are also colorful speech bubbles and gears on the whiteboard.

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