

Welcome to the UK?

The experiences of international students seeking employment

Introduction

- International students come to the UK with high expectations of gaining professional work experience and part time jobs.
- Due to the cost-of-living crisis in the UK, more students are needing to work more hours just to be able to afford to live.
- There has been a lot of negative media about migration to the UK and the voices of international students were noticeably missing in the current narratives.



'Dejections and loss of confidence begin to creep in as job search becomes prolonged.'



Objectives

- To investigate the experiences of international students trying to find work in the UK
- To explore how international students propose to improve job access for themselves and their peers
- To see how effective photovoice is as an approach to student staff partnerships and student peer to peer support within a careers service



Redundant

'This picture represents my feeling of redundancy and the shame that comes with it. The stench that oozes from within and the pain from outside. 3months without a job made me feel blocked from the flow of relevance. It accumulated my worries, increased financial burdens and made me rethink my choice of being in the UK.'



Unfortunately

'This picture signifies rejection to me. You get to apply for many jobs that you feel and know that you're qualified for and then 9 out of 10 times, you get a rejection mail mostly because you do not have a UK work experience.'



'International students feel themselves like these tools who though have potential to do something but [are] kept aside by employers due to lack of UK market experience at their beginner stage.'



'Prepare international students as soon as they arrive for what they will face when looking for work, providing them with the necessary resources and ensuring they feel confident and capable to be on their own.'



'For anyone coming to the UK, I would suggest you prepare yourself for the challenges because starting a career in any new place can be quite challenging and you would have to learn to grow in a less-than-ideal environment.'

Hope

'Being a Part of Photovoice has given me a form of hope, enlightenment and camaraderie. It has given me a lot more insights into solutions that may exist through shared experiences with fellow researchers. Knowing that I'm not alone in my challenges has in some way motivated me to keep pushing towards my goals and dreams.'



Method

- In Photovoice people use photographs and short written explanations to picture their experiences and to express their thoughts.
- The goals of photovoice are: to provide a voice to the participants involved, to raise awareness of a situation & to influence policy.
- 15 student Co-researchers, from 5 different countries, all studying at masters level in the UK; 6 x 2-hour group sessions over 3 months, taking photographs and using them as prompts to discuss their experiences & sorting them into themes which were used to form an exhibition.



'This [photovoice] is a good way to work with students and staff. Both of them are trying to achieve the same goal and are heading parallelly but never cross each other. This kind of a project can act as the line that connects them to each other! They can get a better idea of how the other side works and that might help them grow.'

Preliminary Themes

- 'Unfortunately'; rejections & frustrations
- Barriers to finding work in the UK
- Always working towards a goal
- Building determination & resilience
- The need to better prepare students for the UK labour market
- Photovoice: A shared experience