

# THE ADULT LEARNER'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE EMPIRICAL JOURNEY

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## Abstract

*Teaching matters as much as research matters, (McAleese et al., 2013).*

*This research provides an opportunity to reflect, evaluate and to implement better procedures for practice, specifically, the research supervision of post graduate adult students at taught Masters Level. In this context, empirical data was gathered from recently graduated 'taught masters' students in the business arena in an Irish Third Level Institution.*

*Evaluation studies are fundamentally about asking questions, and then designing ways to try to find useful answers. Studies may concern materials, projects, courses, methods, packages, or systems; in fact, anything that can be asked about in a detailed, structured fashion (Moon, 2001; Harvey, 1998). The students who are cooperating in this evaluation are adult learners who take their educational studies on a part-time base, while working full time. These adult learners are over twenty three years, employed and assuming multiple adult roles. The adult learner and how they learn (andragogy) is of great interest to the author, having worked constantly with such learners for Twelve years in the Higher Education sector. From an educator's perspective, the adult learner is a challenge which requires a full understanding of andragogy.*

*The main objective of this research is to develop a better understanding of adult learners' specific research and learning needs. This current research is novel, as an examination of the academic literature in relation to this area reveals a scant body of work, especially so in an adult learner context. It is envisaged that this research will provide a 'voice' for the students in this field. A quantitative approach is applied and data is gathered from 62 adult graduates.*

*The findings reveal that Knowledge of the area of research methods in general proved to be an area of concern for the adult learner returning to Higher Education. One of the main finding of this study concerns the alignment of the programme as a whole, where it has become apparent and recommended that the 'research methods module' will need to be delivered directly prior to the commencement of the research thesis module. Currently, it is delivered over a year before commencement of the research thesis proper to the students. Overall, the findings are positive and are discussed in detail in this research.*

*Quality teaching and learning has broad horizons, taking place in a research-rich environment, where the subject matter is driven by the latest knowledge and research, delivered in a way which encourages students to develop academic literacy and both subject specific and generic skills which they can apply immediately in the real world, especially in the labour market (McAleese et al., 2013).*

*The main aim of this evaluation of current practices is to establish where improvements can be made as a direct result of the recommendations from the recent graduates in this study. These recommendations will be considered, and relevant resultant changes will be made to improve future practice. It is envisaged that the findings of this research will better inform the author, and the Faculty of Business & Humanities for future programmatic reviews. The objective is that more effective methods will be established for future students to better achieve their own learning and research objectives.*

**Keywords:** Research Supervision, Supervisory Styles, Student Challenges, Masters Level, Instructor Evaluation, Reflection.

## References:

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