3.PROJECT FINDINGS

READING:
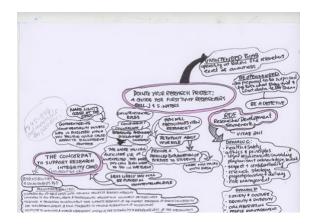
BERA Guidelines

Reading these guidelines has completely changed how I'm approaching my intervention; it's made me look at it in a more robust way, and consider the possible implications beyond making people 'feel good'. I need to reassess the self-care workshop, particularly the peer-to-peer massage, considering potential issues related to privacy, diversity, and individual dignity. The diverse university cohort may pose challenges, and I must explore shorter yet effective self-care techniques, mindful of students' limited time.

While focusing on the benefits, I must also consider potential harm from self-care techniques. Unexpected negative responses, such as triggering anxiety, need careful consideration. Planning the workshop format, possibly in class, requires attention to unintentional harms and simplicity in techniques. Consent procedures, withdrawal options, and data use must be clearly communicated, balancing the dual roles of teacher and massage therapist. Confidentiality and directing students to support services are essential considerations.

Once I had read the BERA guidelines I really began to think deeply and thoroughly into my intervention and beyond the feelgood factor that I'm aiming for; ethical principles, including consent, withdrawal rights, and avoiding harm, are currently guiding my research. Awareness of students' time and effort is also an important consideration, especially when competing with other ARP projects (Mat, who is also on the PgCert, is one of Brand identities leads and will be running his intervention with them. He raised a concern about the ethics of asking students to participate in his ARP as it takes up valuable studio time. I hadn't considered this before and as I'm a visiting tutor I feel that I have less right to demand time from the students and it has helped me to revise the techniques workshop into something smaller and quicker to execute). Ensuring confidentiality in data collection and minimal personal information gathering is essential, and I'm wondering if to simplify the question of anonymity to make the survey completely anonymous (not include age gender ethnicity questions on the form?) Discussing responsibilities and obtaining necessary consents from Harriet and Noemi?

DOING YOUR ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT:
A GUIDE FOR FIRST TIME RESEARCHERS
(J.BELL & S.WATERS)

This book has given me some great insights as to how to approach my ARP and helped me raise questions to look into.

I hadn't thought about '**Unintentional Roles'** and that I'm operating as both teacher and experienced Massage Therapist, so I need to think through clearly how to deal with unintentional consequences, one of which I think could be that the students approach me with their problems (emotional or otherwise) that they haven't divulged to anyone and see me as a confidant or counsellor; Bell advises that the more I can anticipate Unintentional roles the more I can plan what to do in the event of this occurring, so I need to think more broadly about the techniques and any inadvertent results that could arise. The University has a Health and Counselling team who deal with these types of issues, trying to deal with student concerns/problems myself could lead to a difficult and compromising situation especially regarding Guarantee of confidentiality; obviously need to be mindful concerning safeguarding ,and confidentiality must be compromised if you believe that information shared could cause harm to the discloser or another.

It also helped me to start thinking about how I aim to explain what my research is about; they need to understand what I'm trying to do, how it will impact them. I'll need to think about explaining the techniques and what the intended benefits are, what will be required of them, that I'll be asking them to fill out a questionnaire/survey and all the implications in regards to the data and how I'll be using it (will any information be stored online, how and what does that mean in terms of them being identifiable)

I'm thinking it may be best to make the questionnaire as anonymous as possible. This may help to get more people to fill them out

Research Development Framework RDF (Vitae 2011)

Had a look at these guidelines for researchers - which are in line with
BERA recommendations
DOMAIN C
Standards and Professional requirements
- Health & Safety
Choose techniques that have no risk of causing harm (if done incorrectly etc)
- Ethics and principles
Be able to expand on thoughts about 'self care' not as a panacea to other problems in the university. Their feelings could be reasonable responses (anger frustration depression anxiety) to other problems that are raised at this time in universities ie value for money etc
- Legal requirements – avoiding plagiarism and acknowledging sources
Make sure all sources are listed in bibliography and all cited correctly
- Respect and confidentiality
Respect students right to withdraw or not participate, and work out how to keep the research data confidential
- Research strategy
  Make a plan
- Project planning and delivery
Risk management
DOMAIN D
- Society and culture
Aiming to raise awareness on self-care and wellbeing – be mindful of being socially appropriate
- Equality and diversity
Ideas around self compassion and the necessity for this as a baseline for people to empathise and care about others SOCIAL JUSTICE
- Collaboration
- People management

I read the following papers to find out if introducing wellness to university students could be of benefit (and back up my research)

- **Immediate effects of grouped based wellness drumming on effective states in University students**, Mungus MPA and Silverman, PhD MT-BC, 2014.
- **Is the health and well-being of university students associated with the academic performance? Cross-sectional findings from the UK**. Walid El Ansari space and Christiane Stock, 2010
- belonging in higher education – interrogating spaces. Bunting, Hill and Riggs, 2020.
- **Question bank: student check-ins.** Education, 2023.
- **University mental health: life in a pandemic listening to higher education communities throughout 20/21** Frampton et al., 2021.
- **University challenge: towards a well-being approach to quality in higher education** Steuer and Marks 2008
- **My inner perfectionist and nasty side! Self-compassion emotional health and subjective well-being in college students** (Arslan, 2023)

I began my research by looking at what else has been written about wellness and university students; I began with immediate effects of group based wellness drumming on effective states and university students and understood from it's conclusions that the intervention of wellness drumming had had a positive effect and made me feel that I was going in the right direction. However the research was conducted in the United States and I wanted to find something related to UK university students. I learnt from the paper by El Ansari and Christiane Stock that there is a reciprocal relationship between health, health behaviour and educational achievement, and that comprehensive health promotion programs can have the potential to influence relevant predictors of education achievement in University students. They do not only add to population health but contribute to the core business of higher education institutions. Their results support focus on comprehensive health programs at universities, taking into account the multiple factors influencing students achievements, which according to studentminds.org also consist of the main concerns of students, which include performing well in coursework and mental well-being.

I found useful statistics relating to student experience in the COVID-19 pandemic and that the findings demonstrated the need for universities to ensure that student mental health is prioritised; university communities can and should be spaces where students feel supported to thrive. This encouraged me to feel that my intervention could be especially useful at this time, not only in supporting students to help them deal with stress

and anxiety, but also to deal with the added pressures on student mental health that the pandemic brought

What I learnt about research and research methods;
Quantitative researchers use numerical data and structured questions, while qualitative researchers focus on individuals' perceptions using non-numerical, unstructured data; qualitative research starts with general questions and becomes more focused as the study progresses. Action research begins with questions like "Can I improve my practice?" and continues with ongoing review, evaluation, and improvement.
For social surveys emphasize uniqueness and reject rigid do's and don'ts. In areas like education, social science, and health, researchers aim to improve practical outcomes, longer term outcomes are stressed urging a look beyond current practices.
Before starting a study, clarity on its purpose, focus, - sample identification is crucial. Adjustments will likely occur, but identifying key questions and considering needed information is a good start. Planning data collection methods comes after focusing, requiring official permissions for interviews or questionnaires.

To-Do List for Research Approach:

1. Understand Research Methods:
Distinguish between quantitative and qualitative approaches.
Recognize the focus on numerical data and structured questions in quantitative research (find likert scale)
Acknowledge the emphasis on individuals' perceptions using non-numerical, unstructured data in qualitative research (Selfies, how will the students feel about being asked to take them?)
Appreciate how qualitative research evolves from general to focused questions.
2. Embark on Action Research:
Begin with reflective questions: "Can I improve my practice?"
Establish a cycle of ongoing review, evaluation, and improvement.
3. Navigate Social Surveys:
Emphasize the need for flexibility and individuality in approach.
4. Target Impactful Areas:
Strive to improve practical outcomes in the educational/university domain
Stress the importance of longer-term goals, transcending current practices.
5. Prepare for a Study:

Clearly define the purpose, focus, and sample for the study.
Anticipate adjustments along the way.
Identify key questions and gather necessary information as a starting point.
6. Plan Data Collection:
Develop a strategic plan for data collection methods.
Obtain official permissions for interviews or questionnaires.
Ensure a meticulous and organized approach to gathering information.

Approach each step with intentionality, keeping the ultimate goal of impactful research at the forefront.

Action research
From reading about action research (Mc Niff), I now understand that your values become your criteria, it's a self-reflective practice where you live out the things you believe in and starts with an idea you develop in relation to your values. Your values become your criteria. Meanings of embodied values become clear as they emerge during your research, what is what is important in your practice? What drive is it? How do I improve my work for the benefit of others? Action research is something people do in order to improve the quality of life for themselves and for others, the idea is how do I improve what I'm doing for your sake? Firstly identify the problem. Imagine possible solution, try it out, evaluation it - did it work and from reflecting on results, change your practice. Evidence why I'm interested, and why it's relevant to the field of my enquiry. With my evidence I'll be aiming to show development of my influence and how my intervention impacted the students in terms of felt wellbeing and the wider implications to UAL's mandate

Whilst I didn't do this - Pretesting a questionnaire is recommended Exploratory inquiry can involve in-depth interviews with members of target population. Interviewing a few individuals can enrich research researchers perspective. (Converse and Presser, 2011)

I will definitely incorporate more testing in the next round of my action research project