

Peer Reviewed **Opinion Article**

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON OBTAINING A POSTGRADUATE DEGREE IN RADIOGRAPHY AND JOB SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Postgraduate education is increasingly recognised as essential for the professional development of radiographers, offering opportunities in leadership, research, and education while enhancing clinical skills. Pursuing advanced studies also promotes the growth of reflective practice, professional identity and job satisfaction. This opinion article draws on personal reflections from completing a Master of Radiography (MRad) qualification while working full-time in clinical practice. The experiences are organised thematically, focusing on motivation, challenges, professional identity, and the role of academic supervision and mentorship. Postgraduate studies proved to be transformative, despite challenges in balancing academic, professional, and personal commitments. Reflective practice and supervisory support were critical in managing these demands. Engagement in research boosted confidence, evidence-based decision-making, and professional resilience. Postgraduate education extends beyond acquiring a qualification; it serves as a pathway to empowerment, critical thinking, and professional renewal. The experience transformed the author's professional identity from a clinical radiographer to an educator, mentor, and researcher.

INTRODUCTION

Postgraduate education is increasingly recognised as a critical component in the career development of health-care professionals.^[1] For radiographers, pursuing advanced qualifications creates opportunities beyond traditional clinical practice, including roles in research, academia and managerial positions.^[2] In a dynamic and evolving field like radiography, where technological advancements and clinical complexities continue to grow, further education is not only beneficial but a necessity.^[3]

Postgraduate qualifications in radiography often align with broader career aspirations, enabling radiographers to specialise, contribute to evidence-based practice, and influence the future of the profession.^[4] The radiography profession is at a turning point, with increased expectations for practitioners to engage in research and lifelong learning.^[5]

Hapi et al.^[6] identified key competencies and challenges in radiography-led management, recommending evidence-based training and role clarity. Their findings suggest that postgraduate qualifications equip radiographers with the skills needed for leadership in both clinical and academic settings.

Academic supervisors play a vital role in supporting this journey.^[7-8] Their guidance not only aids academic progress

but also provides emotional and professional support, especially when students are navigating unfamiliar research territory.^[9-10] Mentorship from supervisors can significantly influence the success and satisfaction of postgraduate students.^[11]

In this opinion article, I share personal reflections from my own postgraduate journey, offering insights into the challenges and rewards of undertaking a Master of Radiography (MRad) qualification. I aim to highlight how this experience shaped my career trajectory, influenced my understanding of mentorship and reinforced my commitment to fostering knowledge and skills transfer in the clinical environment. I hope that sharing my academic journey may motivate other radiographers to consider postgraduate studies as a meaningful step in their professional lives.

DISCUSSION

The interrelated aspects of my journey are summarised in Figure 1, which illustrates how motivation for postgraduate study, personal challenges, and mentorship collectively contributed to my evolving professional identity. The following sections expand on these interconnected themes in greater depth.

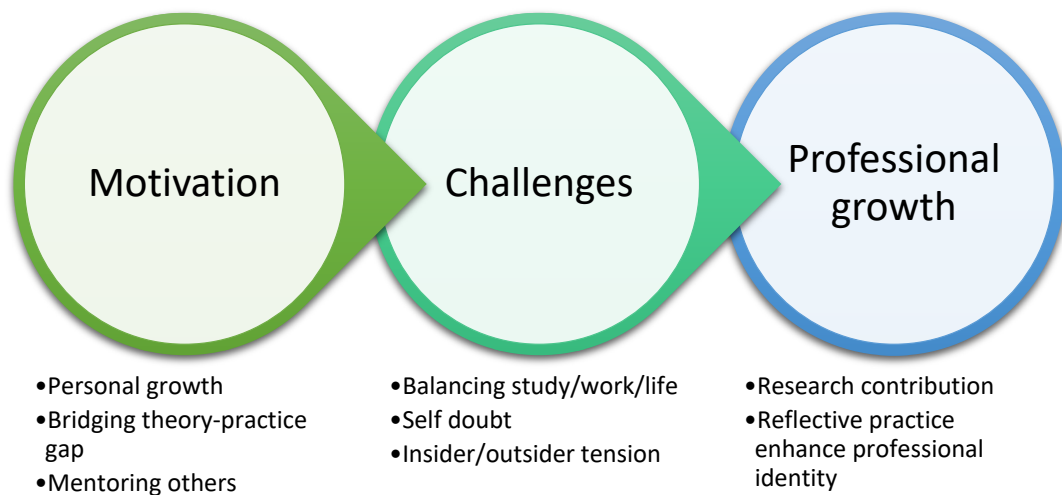


Figure 1. Interrelationship between motivation, challenges, mentorship, and professional identity during my postgraduate study.

Motivation for postgraduate education in radiography

My motivation to pursue postgraduate education stemmed from a desire to enhance personal growth, strengthen professional development, and cultivate a deeper engagement with research that could contribute to both my field and practice. Working full-time in a clinical environment provided me with first-hand experience of the gaps that sometimes exist between academic knowledge and clinical application. I was also increasingly aware of the need for radiographers to be more than just competent imaging technologists, but also to be reflective, critical, and engaged practitioners who contribute meaningfully to the future of healthcare.^[12]

Like many radiographers, I initially viewed postgraduate studies to enhance only my clinical expertise. However, as I progressed, I realised that postgraduate education is deeply research-based and requires selecting a topic that resonates personally. According to Hardy and Snaith^[5], radiographers pursuing postgraduate study often seek to address specific issues within their clinical or educational practice. In my case, as a diagnostic radiographer actively involved in mentoring student radiographers during their clinical placements, I was motivated by the need to bridge the theory-practice gap in student learning and to deepen my role as a clinical mentor within the profession.

My passion for education and mentoring within radiography led me to focus on how knowledge is transferred within clinical environments. This passion stems from my own experiences as both a student and a practitioner, where I witnessed the challenges and opportunities in bridging theory and practice. A major motivation behind my postgraduate journey was the desire to share knowledge with others. Radiography, like all healthcare professions, thrives on shared learning.^[3] By contributing to the academic and clinical dis-

course, we ensure that the profession continues to evolve and adapt to new challenges.^[3-4]

Hence, my research centred on knowledge and skills transfer between diagnostic radiographers and students in the clinical environment, with the broader aim of contributing to improved clinical training, stronger professional collaboration, and ultimately better patient care.^[13]

Challenges of balancing study, work and life

Undertaking a master's degree while working full-time presented several challenges for me. Time management was a constant concern. Balancing clinical responsibilities with academic deadlines, research interviews, and family life required discipline, planning, and often, personal sacrifice. There were moments of self-doubt when I questioned whether I was academically capable and sufficiently prepared for this postgraduate qualification. At times, I wondered whether I possessed the intellectual ability and research competence required to meet its demands. However, it was during these periods of uncertainty that the support of my academic supervisors and peers proved invaluable.

Reflective practice became a cornerstone of my learning journey, with a reflective journal serving as a valuable tool to navigate my roles as a clinical radiographer, mentor, and researcher. Reflective practice involves thinking back on your own experiences to learn and improve professional practice, while reflexive practice requires critically examining how your own position, assumptions, and perspectives may influence the collection, interpretation, and presentation of research data.^[16] I frequently found myself shifting between these roles, at times feeling like an insider when engaging in pedagogical discussions with colleagues, and at

other times like an outsider when analysing interview transcripts and writing chapters. The latter was often an isolating experience that left me feeling academically alone.

Dwyer and Buckle^[14] discuss the concept of “the space between”, a term that perfectly captures the fluid position of being both an insider and an outsider in qualitative research.^[15] Reflexivity, therefore, was essential. It helped me maintain analytical objectivity, ensuring that the data I collected was interpreted fairly and accurately, without being unduly influenced by my own experiences or preconceptions.^[16]

Career development and professional identity

One of the most rewarding aspects of completing a postgraduate degree has been the transformation in my professional identity. I no longer view myself solely as a clinical radiographer. I now see myself as a contributor to radiography education and research, a role that brings with it a sense of purpose and responsibility.

Postgraduate education has opened up opportunities for leadership, curriculum development, and collaboration with academic colleagues.^[2-4] I have been involved in mentoring students and junior radiographers, drawing from both my clinical experience and academic training. This dual perspective allows me to better support others in navigating their own learning journeys.

Research indicates that postgraduate-educated radiographers are more likely to engage in reflective practice and evidence-based decision-making, which contribute to enhanced professional development and support better outcomes for patients.^[17] Moreover, the increased autonomy and responsibility that often accompany advanced roles have been linked to greater job satisfaction.^[18]

The role of academic supervisors and mentorship

The importance of academic supervisors in shaping my postgraduate journey cannot be overstated.^[8] Their consistent guidance, constructive feedback and critical questioning

helped me clarify my research objectives and maintain focus. They challenged me to think deeply, write reflexively, and engage meaningfully with the literature.

Wisker^[9] highlighted the complex and dynamic relationship between postgraduate students and their supervisors, noting that the most productive relationships are built on mutual respect, trust and shared academic goals. I experienced this first-hand. My supervisors were not only academic mentors but also role models in research, teaching and academic writing.

Their impact has significantly shaped critical thinking and academic writing. I understand the importance of being both supportive and challenging, which means fostering independence while providing guidance. Just as my supervisors played a vital role in my development, I now see it as my professional duty to support the next generation of radiographers in reaching their potential.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on my postgraduate journey, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude and accomplishment. The path was not always easy, but it was undoubtedly transformative. I entered the programme seeking professional development and left with a renewed sense of purpose, a stronger professional identity, and a passion for education and mentorship.

Postgraduate education in radiography is more than a stepping stone to career advancement; it is a vehicle for personal growth, professional contribution and improved job satisfaction. It enables radiographers to engage more meaningfully with their work, influence educational and clinical practices, and ultimately enhance patient care. For those considering postgraduate qualifications, I offer this advice: embrace the challenge. It will stretch you, test you and change you, but it will also open doors you never imagined and enrich your understanding of what it means to be a healthcare professional.

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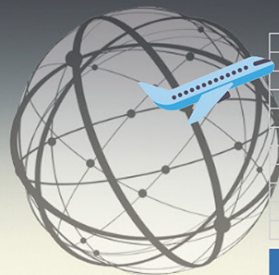
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