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# Undergraduate Engagement With Their Tutors' Original Research

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## Aims:

To examine the views of undergraduate students on a number of research related issues such as:

- Students' awareness of their tutors' research activity.
- Whether tutors are incorporating their research into teaching and how.
- Students' views on the possible benefits and drawbacks of tutors using their research in teaching.
- The ease with which students can independently access their tutors' research.

## Literature review:

Previous studies have examined the relationship between research and undergraduate teaching.

Few investigations into the teaching-research nexus have examined the student perspective.

Whilst several studies have found that students have a positive outlook on tutors' use of their own research in teaching (e.g. Ball and Mohamed, 2010), others have suggested that this is not beneficial to the learning experience (Stappenbelt, 2013) and suggest the two be treated as unrelated entities.

## Method:

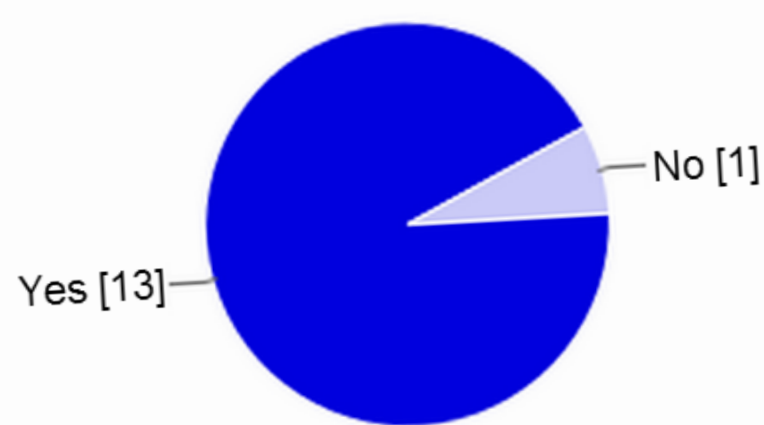
32 undergraduate students were recruited from across 12 subject fields.

In a face-to-face interview, each completed a semi-structured questionnaire based on the work of Healey *et al.* (2010).

This comprised 15 questions eliciting their views on tutors' use of their research in teaching.

Figure 1

Have you directly experienced any of your tutors' actual research outputs?



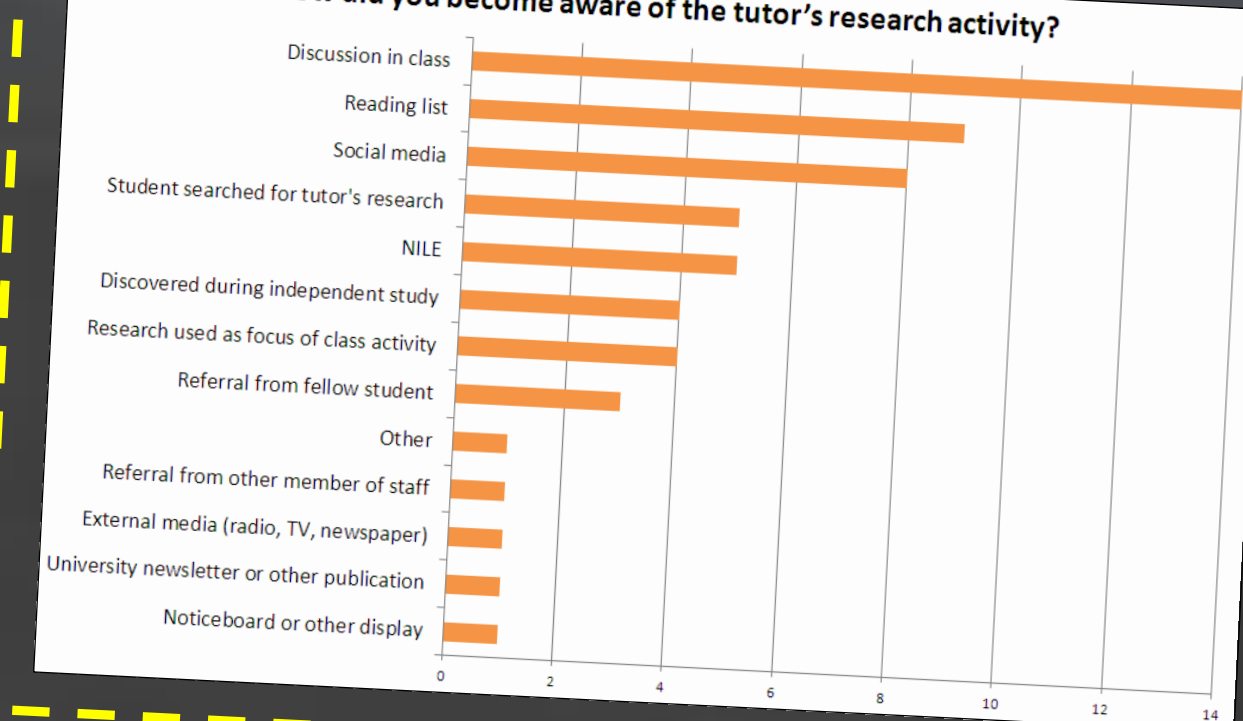
“ I think the way my tutor uses her research works really well. Because it's in the lecture slides you get an overview of what it's about and it's really useful for the topic ”

“ I have more respect for my tutor and trust that he knows what he's talking about ”

“ I think posting the link to the research on NILE was a good idea so we could find it easily and read it if we wanted to, but we weren't pressured ”

Figure 2

How did you become aware of the tutor's research activity?



## Findings:

- The majority of students questioned were aware of their tutors' research [figure 1]. Of these, two thirds said their tutor included their research in teaching.
- Class discussions, reading lists and social media were the leading ways in which students became aware of their tutors' research activity [figure 2].
- Lecture slides and unstructured class discussions were considered most effective for incorporating tutors' research into teaching.
- Engaging with their tutor's research made students feel more interested in the subject and helped them to develop a stronger relationship with their tutor.
- Over half of students whose tutors did not use their research in teaching thought it would be beneficial for their learning.
- Students emphasised the importance of relevance to the topic when learning of their tutors' own research.

## Implications for practice:

Taking these findings into account, it is suggested that tutors' use of research in teaching, where relevant, can enhance students' learning experience.

Therefore, it is recommended that tutors refer to their own research in lecture slides and invite class discussion of the research topic.

For independent study it is suggested that tutors should make their research available electronically via NILE or NECTAR for easy access by students.

## References:

- Ball, S. and Mohamed, M. (2010). Insights on how students perceive the research-teaching nexus: a case study of hospitality management students. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 9(2), 89-101.
- Healey, M., Jordan, F., Pell, B. and Short, C. (2010). The Research-Teaching Nexus: A Case Study of Students' Awareness, Experiences and Perceptions of Research. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 47(2), 235-246.
- Stappenbelt, B. (2013) The effectiveness of the teaching-research nexus in facilitating student learning. *Engineering Education*, 8, 111-120.