Luke Calver 0:15

Hello and welcome. This podcast has been brought to you from UHI and the Careers and Employability team. My name is Luke calver. And in this episode, we'll be focusing on the BA Hons Child and Youth Studies degree showcasing one of the many career paths you could take at once you've graduated. I'm joined by Dr. Mei-Li Roberts programme leader for Child and Youth studies, as well as alum, Sonya Morrison, who will be talking about their career path. Over to Dr. Mei-Li.

Mei-Li 0:41

Thank you, Luke. Hello, Sonya, thanks for agreeing to take part in this today. And I'm just wondering if we could we start off with just a little introduction from yourself. And also just when you graduated from the Child & Youth studies degree?

Sonya Morrison 0:54

Well, I graduated about I would see about five years ago now, five, four, possibly six years. And before that, I worked. Well, initially I worked in for the Tourist Board has gotten to this point, and then I stopped to have my children. And what as I was having my children, I decided to start doing some education wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do at that point, I managed to get some employment in a local nursery. And that made me start to think about a potential career in education or social work. So I applied for the course, and completed my degree. Three years later, I did it online, whilst I was bringing up my three children and working part time in the nursery. And then when I graduated, I decided that I wanted to go into teaching into primary teaching. Having only achieved a C in school, in my higher English, I had to go back and study higher English to get an EOB to get into primary teaching, and I did my maths as well. So I took a year to do that. And then applied to the Aberdeen University delight course, which allowed me to continue to work and study for major teaching diploma, which I did more or less, virtually as well, but like my degree.

Mei-Li 2:40

Thanks, Sonya, you can tell us a little bit already about you know how you got into Child and Youth studies and a little bit about what you did after it. But could you just tell us a little bit more about what your career path has been since you completed a degree and kind of a little bit about your current role

Sonya Morrison 2:57

in making the decision to do primary teaching as opposed to social work, I had to get maths and my English to do my diploma. And then when I finished my my diploma, I then had placements to do. I was in various schools in Inverness, some big schools, some small schools and studying alongside doing placements. And that to about 18 months altogether. So as I went along, you know, I had assessments to do, I was monitored by her teachers, other teachers in the schools that I worked in, and had to just, you know, continue doing the each part of the course until it was eventually time to, you know, have half my work signed off at the end.

Mei-Li 3:59

Thanks, Sonya. Yeah, that's great. That's great. It's great to hear the journey you've kind of been on? And would you be able to tell us a little bit about your, your current role that you're in at the moment.

Sonya Morrison 4:09

The role that I'm in just know is that of recovery teacher for COVID recovery. I've been in post for about a year and a half, doing maths and literacy, recovery. And I work in the schools and the rural schools that feed into the IRA in Inverness Royal Academy. So I drive out to these quieter schools. For example, I'm in fire primary today. And I work with groups to class classes in each of the schools working specifically targeting a team attainment for numeracy, um, for literacy recovery, if that makes sense, all because of the pandemic. This is the reason that there's been Have extra funding by the Scottish Government to employ people like myself to provide this in an each school and the bigger schools have recovery teachers as well, I just do the rural schools.

Mei-Li 5:14

So what would you say that you enjoy the most about your current role,

Sonya Morrison 5:18

I enjoy meeting different staff in different settings. As a mature student and new to teaching, I am able to learn so much by going into different settings, and meeting with with different staff who have got a wealth of experience under their belt. So I feel like I've been, you know, bombarded with all this great practice that I've seen all around me. And I also enjoy learning from from them, and also the children that I meet. I've met, you know, children, all ages and stages and types of need. So I enjoy that aspect of it, meeting lots of different people, and learning from them. And just every day is really interesting.

Mei-Li 6:17

Thanks, Sonya does sound like a very interesting role, particularly part of the kind of covered recovery plan as well, in terms of the childhood years youth Studies degree itself, which obviously started you on this, this, this kind of way, how do you feel that the degree helped you in the role that you're in today, and also your kind of overall career journey?

Sonya Morrison 6:39

Well, I wouldn't have been able to do it without doing my child and youth Studies degree. And I feel that this type of graduate degree, although I had to go into further studying really helped me because it, you know, the modules that I had to to undertake, were specifically linked to, you know, to children, to child psychology really helped me in my role that helping me to understand, you know, child development, I think that's a really important part, besides, you know, the academic bit of being able to implement strategies on addition, and multiplication, etc, the whole psychology side of it was really helpful on the social policy side of it as well, understanding the legislation and different frameworks. So it's without the during the degree, I don't think I would have reached this point.

Mei-Li 7:40

Like, Sonya, you spoken a little bit about the kind of content of the degree, but I noticed when you were talking earlier, talking about having a children and studying at the same time, I was just wondering, if you would have any thoughts on the, the way the degree was delivered as an online degree to that, was that helpful for you, yourself?

Sonya Morrison 8:01

I mean, it suited me perfectly. It was the only way I could have accessed this path that I've taken because I still had a young child at home who very much needed me there and a husband who worked away from home. So had I not been able to access the court course digitally, I just simply wouldn't have been able to have undertaking my teaching education at this point in my life.

Mei-Li 8:29

Thanks, Sonya. And just thinking as well we've been talking about kind of your career pathway and the degree content so on with the new HR we've got our obviously our UHF graduate attributes which are those kind of soft skills that you develop, you know, time management communication, as well as academic knowledge. What do you think would be some of the key graduate attributes that you think you develop through during the during the degree at uhi and have the skills use helps you in your working world?

Sonya Morrison 8:59

The one that sticks out is writing academically. I think I just you know, I obviously did at one point in my life when I was much much younger, but I had completely lost that skill and being able to you know, to write you know, properly again, that was probably the main one for me being able to meet digitally with other students with tutors, achieving deadlines, organising myself around assessments, looking for material to help me write my assessments, just general personal organisation and and and yes, time management alongside my running my my home running my children's itinerary. And also my part time work or how to be, it was all quite tight, but achievable. And sometimes it just was a case of making a daily list of what you had to do and what you had to remember, because sometimes it just felt like there was so much going on that if I didn't write everything down, you know, chances were, I would have forgotten about something or miss something out. And that, for me was the the best way of doing it. I just chipped away and wrote everything down and just tried to sort of make sure that I was organised on a daily basis, a weekly basis. And I knew when my deadlines were, and I was able to give that time to work towards it.

Mei-Li 10:50

And as any of that's carried forward into your current job role, now, those kind of skills that you gained, you know, you're talking about innovation occation,

Sonya Morrison 11:01

definitely organising myself. Just making sure that also, you know, finding, you know, not necessarily knowing the answers to everything, but it sort of opened open doors, as to how to find out the answers to things because even as a teacher, you, you don't know everything about everything. So you have to go through this process of looking for that information. And, you know, doing all that reading that you did when you were a student, and I still do a lot of reading and still do a lot of resourcing. So these are skills that I learned on my course.

Mei-Li 11:40

Thank you. So that kind of independent research and the critical thinking skills that you've Yeah, absolutely,

Sonya Morrison 11:47

yes. And that absolutely continues and will I think as long as I'm a teacher, it will, because you're always developing, you will never know everything, you'll never get to the bottom of reading. So and also another thing, I became much better at finding the the important information that I did need to look into because as I see, can't read everything, can't do everything. But you need to be able to prioritise the prioritising was another skill that I developed, I suppose.

Mei-Li 12:23

Thanks for that, Sonya. So, just kind of final question, if you're going to give some advice to our current students, from your experiences, both, you know, during the degree itself, but also kind of your, your pathway into teaching, what would that be,

Sonya Morrison 12:40

I would see, don't think about the end goal at the beginning, just chip away at each part of the course. So for me, teaching seemed such a long way away if I ever got there, and every thought that I would get there. But I just used to think to myself that I'm going to do this assessment and see how I get on. Then I'll do the next one. And then I'll do the next one after that. And I'll just do my best. For each bit of my journey, I tried to sort of put it into small chunks, rather than think of it as an overall goal that seemed, you know, like going to the moon at the time, because it seems like I had so much to get through before I arrived. And that took a lot of the worry away from me. Because I still knew I knew only needed to get my English and my maths. But I just thought well, this is the first bit my degree is important. So I need to make sure that I'm good to do this to the best of my ability and I just dealt with each module as it happened each assessment as that happened and just did the best I could try to arrange my life around that and organise my priorities and and also remember to, to talk to other people. So if there's other students on your course, to maybe see if you can maybe go for a coffee with them meet up and have a proper chat. It's so different, different to meeting virtually. So having a proper blather about the things that you're finding difficult with and because they know how do you feel? So I think meeting up with people that are courses written or just reaching out if you're ever stuck, because a couple of times I was I was so I would just rattle off a little email. And you know, I would say an end up having some some help somebody was there to help me because there's always somebody there to give you a hand not to sort of sit there and worry about it. Just Sometimes you spend too long and procrastinating over things. And it's easier just to, to pick up the phone or to send an email and get your questions answered.

Luke Calver 15:10

Is there anything extra maybe you might want to add Sonya that we might not have asked, which you might feel is a good for students to hear.

Sonya Morrison 15:18

If you're interested in the course, then just enjoy. You know, sounds a bit cliche, but just enjoy it. I mean, when I started, I was just, you know, I thought maybe I would go into teaching, I wasn't very sure. But I wanted to, to prove to myself that I could, you know, that I could still educate myself, even though I was a mature person. Because I brought up my family. And I thought, you know, what, what's next, I just kind of dipped my toe into the water and education and picked a course that I thought I would enjoy, and I did enjoy it. So I think the My advice would be is to, is to enjoy it as much as you can, because it's, it's an interesting course. And some of the modules maybe I enjoyed more than others not saying I enjoyed all of them. But overall, I would say that, you know, it was definitely rewarding, and great to, you know, to pass and to have that sense of achievement for yourself, regardless of whether you do anything with it at the end. I think it was just that feeling of, of achievement and to be able to be a role model to my own children.

Mei-Li 16:41

Thanks again, Sonya. Yes, it's good. You're an inspiration. I don't know about that. We have so many students who are like yourself are working, have children, and studying as well. So it's good to hear, you know, to encourage our students, our current students that they can can achieve and to see where you're at now, after completing and going forward. So thanks so much.

Luke Calver 17:11

Thank you very much, Mei-Li, and Sonya. We hope that this podcast episode has helped show you a potential career path from the child and youth studies degree. If you do have any questions about the child and youth Studies degree do contact uhi. If you're a current student and have questions on this career path, do contact either Mei-Li or the careers team and we'll be happy to help you. Thank you very much for listening and thank you again Sonya for participating in this podcast episode.

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