

Chapter 13

Developing an Interprofessional E-Learning Pathway: Leading Academics Through the Change Challenge

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ABSTRACT

Implementing interprofessional education is fraught with challenges, developing an e-learning approach whilst overcoming some challenges, is still not smooth. This chapter using a case study approach offers an insight into the successful development and implementation of an interprofessional e-learning pathway. The chapter draws on the authors' experiences of the challenges and constraints in setting up this model. By unpacking these challenges the reader will be offered the opportunity to explore the impact on two Higher Education Institutes and the professional groups working within these organisations. It highlights the difficulties associated with managing change and the importance of strong leadership at key points within this process.

INTRODUCTION

Interprofessional education (IPE) has become a key focus in the Higher Education institutions (HEI) that provide education to health and social care professional groups. In the last 20 years evidence has increased which supports the inclusion of IPE in health and social care curricula (Barr, 2009). It is also apparent within the literature surrounding IPE, that acceptance of interprofessional

initiatives have grown, and with this a growing hope and belief that IPE might be part of the solution to improve the experience of patients, service users, clients, carers and their families (Department of Health [DH], 2000a; General Medical Council [GMC], 2003, 2009; Bluteau & Jackson, 2009).

IPE, without doubt, has caused tension during its initiation, gradual introduction and development within curricula in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Barker et al., 2005; Bluteau

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& Jackson, 2009). This chapter explores a case study of the implementation of IPE within an e-framework across two universities, beginning with the thinking behind the choice of an e-learning experience in contrast to the more prevalent face to face encounters within IPE. Whilst this is only representative of two institutions, neither the challenges or experiences are unique (Freeth et al., 2005; Gilbert, 2005). This account provides the reader with an insight into this journey highlighting potential pitfalls associated with the implementation of IPE. Next it explores the challenges experienced in developing IPE and offers a model of the challenges within the context of an Interprofessional e-learning pathway (IpeLP). Finally, by using a deconstructive approach, the chapter illustrates the maturation process of this model in the context of IPE.

BACKGROUND

Interprofessional working is dependent on individual professionals having a sound understanding of the roles, skills, knowledge and guiding philosophies of other professions (Gordon & Walsh, 2005). In the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences at Coventry University in collaboration with Warwick Medical School at the University of Warwick, there are fourteen separate courses leading to registration as a qualified health and social care professionals, and hence a great opportunity to learn with, from and about students from other professions. The process of the different groups discussing their own roles and insights with others helps to celebrate the unique skills and knowledge that each profession brings to an integrated model of patient, client, care or service user care.

This case study draws on the authors' experiences of the first year of developing and implementing an Interprofessional e-learning Pathway (IpeLP) in which eleven of these different professional groups participated, with Social

Work, Youth Work and Operating Department Practitioners joining later. (Figure 1).

The process of developing a model in relation to the challenges that have surrounded the inception and development of IPE demands the inclusion of some context in which to frame the important components of IPE. Collaboration is a major component of IPE (Barr, 2009; Barr, 2005; Yan et al., 2007; Jackson & Bluteau, 2009). The underlying concept of IPE is to teach future professionals to work collaboratively within health and social care teams so that they are able to deliver quality care to each and every patient/client/service user (Barr et al., 2005). Whilst there is good evidence (Reeves et al., 2008, Hermesen et al., 2005, The Audit Commission 1999, Wilcock et al., 2000) to support the belief that collaboration through teamwork does indeed improve the quality and continuity of patient centred care, there are many challenges that hinder this process.

In terms of the educational process these challenges could be viewed in terms of a two strand continuum. At one extremity, within the HEI, there are issues such as lack of faculty support (Gilbert, 2005), timetabling difficulties (Cooper et al., 2001; Oandasan et al., 2005) and cost (Pecukonis, 2008) which are frustrating, time consuming and generally irritating, but on the whole practical

Figure 1. Participating students in the level 1 IPLP module – September 2005 to January 2006 Cohort.

Professional group	No. of participants
Adult Nursing:	261
Medical	191
Midwifery	24
Dietetics	42
Physiotherapy	162
Occupational Therapy	156
Learning Disability Nursing	32
Clinical Psychology	15
Paramedic	27
Mental Health Nursing	66
Child Nursing	27
Total number of students	1002
Facilitators	34

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