LEADERSHIP IN CHALLENGING THE PROCESS: CREATING A DISCOURSE ON CURRICULA PRACTICE IN REGARD TO CLINICAL SKILLS CURRICULUM

Maria Mackay1, Patrick Crookes1
1 University of Wollongong

This presentation will outline the findings of a project that aimed to demonstrate leadership in challenging existing clinical skills curricula practice in universities across Australia. This project took a risk in creating a conversation on the clinical skills that exist within curriculum and the perceived inability of the education sector to adequately prepare graduates for the workforce.

The project was one component of a wider research project that has developed the Nursing Competency Schedule (NCAS) which provided significant leadership in the area of competency assessment with approximately 20 universities now using the same assessment tool (Crookes & Brown 2010).

It utilised curriculum mapping and descriptive data analysis to compare and contrast the data collected in the mapping process. Qualitative thematic analysis was undertaken cumulative information that was gathered in conversation.

This presentation will report the results of the curricula mapping project highlighting the commonalities and differences in the inclusion of clinical skills in current pre-registration nursing curricula in Australia. Findings of this research have highlighted how by providing leadership for universities in developing nursing curriculum, they were able to clearly identify and articulate how clinical skills are taught and assessed in the context of the overall program.

Universities were able to achieve a significant increase in their awareness in regard to their strengths and weaknesses regarding clinical skills curricula and demonstrate a change in curricula to strengthen their applications for re-accreditation.

Nursing is a practice based profession where students are required to gain a level of clinical competence to be eligible to register as a nurse on the completion of their degree. There is a lack of agreement at both a National and International level in regard to the clinical skills that are required in pre-registration curricula. There was a perceived need for a university to lead a provocative dialogue with education providers and health care services in regard to the clinical skills required to be included in pre-registration nursing curricula.

This conversation required the facilitators to have a strong repour with industry and have the courage to raise issues that are controversial.

There was a need to identify for universities who offer nursing degrees to consider the clinical skills they were teaching and how this prepared their graduates for the reality of practice. Leadership is required the need to challenge the process and create conversations that explored new and innovative practice in regard to student clinical skills development (Brooks Moriarty & Welyczko 2010, Johnson, Chang & O’Brien 2009 and Boxer & Kluge 2000).

We would expect nursing students to be exposed to an environment that enables them to challenges the process in a safe and efficient way. Overall students tend to be site focussed on their area of practice with little appreciation given to the overall breadth of nursing practice.

This study will provide a significant body of information for universities and the health care sector on how to implement curricula change that is responsive to industry and the students needs.

CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION: LEADING CHANGE THROUGH A RESEARCH DRIVEN CONSULTATIVE MODEL

Marcus O’Donnell1, Anne Melano1, Margaret Wallace1, Romy Lawson1, Eeva Leinonen2
1 Learning Teaching & Curriculum, University of Wollongong 2 Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic, University of Wollongong

Leading change and educational transformation in higher education institutions has been the subject of significant research and scholars have articulated a number of unique factors that can mitigate or enhance change processes within the sector (McRoy et al 2009; Scott et al 2008; Pennington 2003). Any successful curriculum renewal program must overcome these typical points of resistance and add a specific set of characteristics which influence the process of change in the higher education environment (Blackmore & Kandiko 2012). This article outlines the process that The University of Wollongong, a medium-sized research-intensive, regional university in Australia adopted to develop an institution wide curriculum model. The UOW Curriculum Transformation Project (CTP) adopted an action research process (McNiff 2013) developed through a series of stakeholder consultations and a process of grounded theory development in which the educational experience of key academic staff was explored in relationship to broader pedagogical and educational theory. This process was designed to maximize the possibility of successful supported change through carefully addressing known impediments to and pre-conditions of change within the higher education sector (Pennington 2003). The paper sets out the theoretical background to the Curriculum Transformation Project, the consultative action research method developed and the curriculum model adopted by the University. The project adopted a process that was informed by four key factors:

* The institutional history of curriculum change and previous good practice
* The sector demands for greater quality assurance and accountability
* The research on curriculum best practice
* The practice wisdom of UOW academics

These four factors were conceived as a continuous feedback loop in which, for instance, research was fed into the consultations which both helped develop a model which was then further refined with reference to sector demands and previous institutional efforts. In reporting this overview the authors seek to make a contribution to both the developing literature on institutional curriculum transformation and to the understanding of leading change processes within the higher education sector.


Pennington, G., 2003, Guidelines for Promoting and Facilitating Change, LTSN Generic Centre.