



## “Interprofessional Education. An exploration of student and staff perspectives in the School of Education, Social Work and Community Education at the University of Dundee”.

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This case study explores both the student and staff experience of two core modules delivered as part of the interprofessional/interdisciplinary year one learning and teaching for students in community education, teacher education and social work. The case study, drawn from an action research project, demonstrates that students experienced an initial disorientation which was exacerbated by complex subject areas not seen as relevant by the students. By contrast, the focus on human development and psychology in practice was seen to be useful by the student cohort. Both staff and students felt that environmental factors influenced the quality of teaching on these modules. In general, both staff and students rated the quality of teaching, assessment and staff support as relatively high although there was a consensus that more interactive, task orientated approaches were most effective. Finally, there was both a staff and student view to suggest that interprofessional education is perceived as being more useful at a later stage of the students training beyond year one..

### **1. Origin of the project**

The context and setting for this work is the University of Dundee, within the School of Education, Social Work and Community Education. The three lecturers representing the three departments within the school had a shared responsibility for the planning and delivery of two interdisciplinary modules in year 1 of the three undergraduate programmes (SCQF level 7) namely, Personal and Professional Development (PPD) and Professions in Context (PIC). We agreed that we needed to have a more critical sense of “the student experience”, and also a better understanding of how school staff perceived the development and implementation of these modules.

### **2. Purpose**

We agreed that the student experience would be central to this research. Its effectiveness, methods and a comparative evaluation of PIC and PPD along with insight into how students and staff perceived the link between interdisciplinary theory and their emerging practice would be beneficial.

### **3. Envisaged outcomes**

- To explore perceptions and narratives from the student perspective in first year of the Teacher Education, Social Work and Community Education programmes and to examine potential links with practice.
- To develop an insight into how staff with involvement in one or both modules perceive greater effectiveness in the area of interprofessional working.
- To develop an insight into how students involved in both modules perceive greater effectiveness in the area of interprofessional working.

## 4. Preparation and support

The timescale for this project in total was over a six month period from September 2005 until March 2006. The methodology utilised in this research project involved four specific procedures, these were: Initial desk research and design, questionnaire, focus group and semi-structured interviews. As a team of three we analysed the data for our own respective programmes and share tentative findings before examining closely the patterns emerging from the collated data as a whole.

### Desk Research and Design

This involved reviewing documentation on the PIC and PPD modules and discussing with key staff the historical and current design aspects, in relation to Learning, Teaching and Assessment. Meetings were held with colleagues to develop the focused research questions which would influence the action research operationally. Adherence to school ethical guidelines was discussed with our heads of department and permission to proceed was given.

### Questionnaire

- The focused on the following areas against a low to high rating, ordinal Likert scale:
- A basic profile of the respondent
- An analysis of the students' perception of core module content and the relationship with perceived personal development.
- The student's rating of formative and summative assessment methods.
- An assessment of teaching approaches and the quality of staff support
- A rating of cross discipline understanding by the student cohort
- An assessment of how the student rated the impact on current and future professional practice.
- Student suggestions for improvements in design and delivery of both PIC and PPD modules.

### Focus Groups

The recorded focus group sessions involved 50 student participants from across the three programmes and were carried out in February 2006 lasting on average one hour and twenty five minutes.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

The semi-structured interviews involved **15** staff from across the three programmes and were carried out over a two week period in February 2006 each session lasting approximately 45 minutes.

## 5. Developmental issues

As a staff team we learnt a great deal about the efficacy of our own learning, teaching and assessment methods from the perspective of the student and also other colleagues within the School of Education, Social Work and Community Education. From the evidence gathered we were able to develop a more systematic understanding of content, the timing of delivery and the need to spend more time on cross-discipline working to encourage the students to work together more effectively.

## 6. Findings

- Feedback from staff suggests that interprofessional training of a more advanced form may be more effectively delivered in years two, three and four.
- Data from the interviews suggests that perhaps a better grounding in psychology and sociological thinking is needed before students can be expected to make sense of practice elements.
- As we reflected on the data feedback we were able to assess the value of our own contributions in both core modules. We observed that the post lecture seminars, particularly in the psychologically driven areas, seemed to enable the students towards a better understand of the topic.

- On the basis of the evidence developed in this research, it seemed that we were not preparing the students adequately for their first assignment. Student feedback suggested that we should be focusing on study and writing skills in advance of essay submission. The environmental concerns expressed by both staff and students also caused us some concerns.

## 7. Next steps

This work will be used to inform the development of a new interprofessional module for the session 2007/2008, "The Developing Professional", which will replace the former 2 modules, 'Professions in Context' and 'Personal and Professional Development' examined in this case study.

## 8. Feedback

We welcome feedback from colleagues who are involved in interprofessional education work particularly in similar disciplines to our own, namely; Education, Social Work and Community Education. Is your experience similar or different to our own? Where are the tensions and opportunities in this type of work? Do you have any learning, teaching and assessment approaches which we could learn from?



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