Danish University Colleges

Reflection as a tool to encourage student engagement and collaboration in interdisciplinary and cross-professional activities.

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Hypothesis
The students (see Fig. 1) primary task in the 10 weeks interprofessional (IP) module in Maternal and Child Health theme was a Wiki project. A Wiki is an editable website that is created by multiple authors. A platform where students were confronted with complex interprofessional (IP) situations such as misunderstandings or conflicts over the roles and responsibilities of the other team members and over their professional boundaries. The hypothesis was that this might impede the IP group work1, but that reflection as a developmental1 and systematic approach to thinking about experiences would lead to both in-depth learning and change of actions. Hence, reflection should challenge students understanding of themselves, their attitudes and engagement so that they may be more critical, their interpretation of their own professional and IP practice2. This was thought to result in individual and professional development and improvement of the students learning3, Therefore, reflection could be a learning tool helping students analyze and evaluate complex IP relationships and enhance collaborative team work as well as encourage innovative thinking4.

The study aim and design:
The aim of the study:
A pilot study was designed to investigate the reflection methodology in improving student engagement in self-initiated activity in IP group work. Two groups out of fifteen were introduced to the reflection methodology and followed up upon through the course of 10 Weeks (See Fig 2).

The investigation methodology of this study included:

- Ethnographic approach:
  - Guided field notes written by the lecturers
  - Interactive observation of group-work
  - Short interviews after each group-work observation
  - Focus group interviews near the end of the module

Online survey approach:
- Pre-study - Week 5-6
  - Introducing the lecturers of both the intervention and control groups.
  - Followed by introducing the students to the research.
- Experimental phase - Week 6-14
  - Implementing different reflection methodologies to help improve the IP group work for the wiki project.
  - Independent researcher followed the students 3 times throughout the module where she observed their group-work and conducted short interviews after each group-work observation.
- Post-Study - Week 6-14
  - At the end of the module the independent researcher guided and facilitated the focus group interviews.

Student Perceptions of the Wiki project as a learning tool:
From several interviews and a focus group, backed by theories on participants perspectives5, the analysis shows that the students were able to achieve second order reflection (see Fig. 4).

Group 1 stressed that “Many of the lectures were quite interesting if you liked child health and yeah, afterwards we were reflecting on them to be sure about the concepts. Also the fact that you could reflect on your own experiences, that you could relate to. It was very interesting.” While group 2 highlighted that making a short movie, Padlet group discussion and creating IP model for a specific target group as the most worthwhile reflective means. As they explained “I think that if there are anything you could mention here, it would perhaps be the video, because it meant that we actually had to reflect. So I do not know if it helped to better comprehend, but it did, because we have to reflect on it.” “Well maybe something with models, but it was integrated into teaching. Maybe it helped a little.” and “There was also a time when we sat down for a lecture in which we were discussing something about our own profession. There, I think we sat together. Then we wrote something down in the padlet, afterward we discussed it. It is from that you get some different perspectives. It was very exciting when something came up and it was inspiring.”

Reflection incited the groups transformation and created immense group engagement as intervention group 1 elaborated that “It’s like a real revolution, maybe a little bit.”

Reflection, Wiki project and group work engagement
As seen in Fig 3 the students reported that the reflection questions and models helped them to get rich and in-depth knowledge of interprofessional collaboration (IP/C) and prepared them for future collaboration with other professions. Moreover, the survey results revealed that the intervention groups have a better understanding of their own professional role and the role of other professions which strengthened their own professional identity in comparison to the control.

Conclusion
The reflection methodology inspired outstanding engagement of the students during the self-initiated wiki project. Furthermore the ability to analyze IP situations and conflicts through reflection and conducting interviews and focus group interviews allowed the students to reach second order reflection. This facilitate the IP group work and allowed a better understanding of IP concepts and theories. Hence a satisfying outcome for the pilot project.

References: