Facilitating cooperation in interprofessional education using a study activity model - An action research project

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Background
The Danish University Colleges have since 2013 used a common model of study activity. The model was introduced as a result of a political demand for an increase in the amount of classroom lectures given to the students. A key point in introducing the model was that learning involves much more than classroom lectures. All students at the UCs are therefore introduced to the model in order to heighten their understanding of course design and the expectations of student participation in the courses.

So far, both lecturers and students have found the model difficult to use. The project is centred around inter-professional courses (IPE) at the Metropolitan University College. Previous evaluations of the IPE courses show that there are continuous challenges, concerning both the collaboration between the lecturers and the students’ experience and participation in the IPE courses.

This project investigates whether the study activity model can be used in developing collaborative and didactical knowledge in IPE.

Action Research
Baseline design and data collection
The purpose of this study is to develop knowledge of educational practice through the triangle described by Hummelvoll: evidence, research and practice.

Hummelvoll advocates turning locally based knowledge into global knowledge.

The study is a mixed-method study using quantitative and qualitative methods inspired by the four stages of action research.

Data was collected in 2015, quantitatively exploring 538 students’ evaluation of the current use of the model in the IPE courses, and qualitatively exploring points of view of lecturers as well.

Preliminary results - baseline
• Forty percent of the students say that they do not remember being introduced to the model in the IPE-courses
• 60 percent of the students indicate that the model to a lesser extent or not at all provide an overall understanding of the expectations of students participation.

Students do not use the study activity model to understand their learning process.

The study activity model can serve as a mean in acquiring an overview of the curriculum.

Lecturers view the model as an external demand for documentation of their activities.

Lecturers view the model as a potential for being a partner in student participation.

The 4 categories of the model are not immediately transparent to the lecturers and they might not even be meaningful.

Research question
How can the Study Activity Model serve lecturers as a common mean of development, execution and evaluation of learning activities in the IPE course and contribute to the sharing of knowledge and the development of the lecturers’ competencies?

The study activity model
The model outlines four different types of learning activities and emphasizes the student’s own activity and responsibility in the learning process. Thus, learning appears as a much broader phenomenon than just the performance of the lecturer.

Implications for practice and further research
• The study activity model has a pedagogical potential that can be better deployed
• The model requires working with underlying pedagogical discussions
• Lectures need facilitation when collaborating in pedagogical processes

Key questions for further research:
• How can the model be used in order to be meaningful and applicable for lecturers and students?
• What can make the model stimulate pedagogical reflection among lecturers and students?

In 2016 the project will gather data in cooperation with lecturers through qualitative methods and a follow-up to the baseline to further explore the potential of the study activity model as a mean of pedagogical development. The qualitative data will be processed by current hermeneutical and phenomenological methods.