Blended learning design for health students from University College of Northern Denmark in international internships

Background
Physiotherapy students having their internships abroad are concerned whether they can reach the learning outcome and if they get the necessary counseling. By creating a digital learning environment, we want to support their clinical training. Practice communities in digital habitats by Wenger and Bound’s research on peer learning are the basic.

Relevance
Society calls for interactive and reflective health professionals and the subtheme ‘Innovative and sustainable teaching’ is relevant and by using blended learning health students can develop skills that enable them to take action upon new services in health organizations.

Aim
To develop a digital counseling programme to support student’s learning in international internships and to improve the quality being in regular contact with local lecturer.

Participants
18 students were invited and have completed the digital counseling programme during four clinical training periods in the autumn 2013 and 2014. 12 students were in their 6th semester and 6 students were at their 5th semester.

Methods:
Students were introduced to the programme before leaving and divided in groups. Based on the student’s portfolio on clinical reasoning the counseling and peer learning were conducted.

The Design-Based Research-model has an interactive approach which allows testing and improving designs in practice during the process.

Starting platform was IT’S-LEARNING. Evaluations showed needs for notifications and easier availability and the platform was changed to FACEBOOK.

Evaluation
Four digital learning processes were evaluated online after each process. Experience was furthermore explored through a focus group interview. The aim was to gain insight in what, how and in which way students perceived the learning processes as meaningful.

Results
The students benefit greatly from the lecturer’s counseling regarding written portfolios and by reading each other’s portfolio in order to contribute as peers. Peer learning processes during the internships was experienced as difficult. Students liked participating in the digital sessions, but preferred questions initiated by the lecturer.

Conclusions
The result comprises important issues of interest to the future didactic development in health education.

Learning processes based on an interactive approach combined with a clinical reasoning seems relevant.

Keywords
Blended learning, digital learning platform, clinical reasoning

3 Christensen, Gynther & Petersen (2012): Design-Based-Research – introduktion til en forskningsmetode i udvikling af nye E-læringskoncepter og didaktisk design medieret af digitale teknologier, Læring og Medier, nr. 9
Wenger:
The tools
The platforms
The features
The configuration