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Integrative Pedagogic and Connective Learning - Developing New Learning Environments to Cross the Border Between Education and Working Life

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PURPOSE: The ability to conceptualize working practices and to apply formal knowledge through metacognition and critical reflection in practice are prerequisites for professional growth. Thus the integration of formal and informal knowledge is crucial in the development of professional expertise as well in basic education as in continuing professional development. The integration of theory and practice in physiotherapy education has been criticized for being inadequate. Formal knowledge seems to be poorly transferable into practice which has been shown in several studies. This can be seen as a hindrance for student learning especially during clinical practice. That is why it is necessary to develop new ways and methods for learning in collaboration between working life and higher education. The purpose of this project was to create a learning environment where connective learning is fostered. **RELEVANCE:** This project is an example of networking and collaborative learning. Learning is based on innovations in real life situations in physiotherapy practice. The dialogue between students, physiotherapists and teachers forms the basis for connective learning model breaking the traditional barriers between education and practice. **DESCRIPTION:** This project is based on integrative pedagogic and a curriculum design, where the real life contexts of learning and use of formal and informal knowledge has been taken into the consideration. The focus in this model is on the effect of the context of learning in the learning process, the situational nature of learning and transfer skills, which give the students possibilities to become acquainted with the expertise culture in physiotherapy and enhances the ability to act in different environments. The project is carried out in collaboration between two schools and the surrounding physiotherapy units. The learning assignments are connected to practice from the very beginning of the education in the form of projects, written essays, presentations, clinical practice and final project. The emphasis is on evidence based practice and physiotherapeutic reasoning. **RESULTS:** Applying new models and bringing new ideas into practice is time consuming and demands commitment and dialogue between students, clinicians and teachers. According to the feedback the model seems to facilitate the integration of formal and informal knowledge in practice. The idea of connective learning has been beneficial for all partners, although it is evident that the learning results are not the same. **CONCLUSIONS:** The integration of theoretical and practical knowledge and metacognitive skills is a way to foster professional growth in physiotherapy.