The disconnect between the Communities of Practice (CoP) learning theory and educational practices in the Pharm.D. programme at Qatar University

Banan Mukhalalati

Qatar University, Doha, Qatar

Background: Qatar is undergoing a remarkable escalation in economic status, focusing on improving healthcare and education. Graduating qualified clinical pharmacists who contribute to the healthcare workforce require curriculum reform initiatives that continuously improve the accredited Pharm.D. programme at Qatar University (QU) (Wilbur *et al*., 2015). Integrating pharmacy education with pharmacy practice through the implementation of the Communities of Practice (CoP) social theory of learning, as proposed by Austin and Duncan-Hewitt in 2005, was not well adopted (Noble *et al*., 2011). However, there is scope to consider the CoP theory as a framework for the continued development of pharmacy education (Waterfield, 2011).

Objectives: Examine the evidence of implementing the CoP learning theories in the QU Pharm.D. programme.

Methodology: A case study research (Yin, 2014) is conducted to develop a CoP theory-informed framework and to use this framework as a theoretical instrument to analyse the QU Pharm.D. programme.

Results: The research sheds light on the nature of the disconnect between the CoP theory and the educational practices in the QU Pharm.D. programme, indicating that the disconnect is at the 'implicit disconnect' level, which means that some elements of the CoP framework were implicitly evident. This explains the challenges faced in the programme and the associated consequences for the learning experiences of the students.

Discussion: The significance of the full and explicit implementation of learning theory in the design and application of educational practices calls for the better integration of academic, practice, accreditation, and governmental sector efforts in pharmacy education reform initiatives.

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Educator development and quality assurance: Design and evaluation of a pharmacist tutor training programme for enhanced links with pharmacy practice

Gillian Knott[1], Linda Crane[2], Ian Heslop[1], Beverley Glass[1]

[1]*James Cook University, Townsville, Australia*

[2]*Bond University, Gold Coast , Australia*

Background: The involvement of practising pharmacists as sessional tutors provides a number of benefits for a pharmacy programme, including their unique role in bridging the theory-practice gap and ensuring the currency and relevance of the pharmacy curriculum. However, their lack of training and support has been highlighted over recent years (Knott *et al*., 2015).

Objectives: To design and evaluate a pharmacy-specific tutor training programme for pharmacist tutors at James Cook University, based on their needs.

Methodology: A needs analysis study involving key stakeholders was conducted which informed the design of the tutor training programme. The programme was evaluated in terms of tutor confidence and competence using two post-training self-evaluation surveys. Descriptive statistics and qualitative thematic analysis were used to analyse the survey data.

Results: The training programme was very well received, with 83% of tutors agreeing that the programme was relevant to their current needs. Tutors also reported improvements in both confidence and competence in all areas, particularly in assessment and marking skills. Other benefits highlighted by tutors included better role clarification, improved teaching consistency and the acknowledgement of tutors as an integral part of the pharmacy programme.

Discussion: The contribution of sessional staff such as pharmacist tutors at universities has long been under-recognised and undervalued (Ryan *et al*., 2013). This training programme has not only improved tutor confidence and competence but has also facilitated improved communication and networking between academic staff and practising pharmacists. This has the potential to strengthen the link between academia and pharmacy practice and support a seamless transition from university to the workplace.

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