Developing learning materials to promote positive interaction with people with dementia: we are all in it together!

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Opening Doors

Interdisciplinary project working with an older persons' theatre group to produce digital images of scenarios based on research evidence of good practice in communication with people with dementia.

Scenarios were used to create digital stories for teaching a range of health and social care professionals.

Innovative approaches using the ARTS

- Cultural theories from the arts and humanities offer new insights (Barrett and Bolt 2007)
- Sharing power about *content* of learning materials and their construction
- Process of experimentation and negotiation
- Opportunities to develop creative imagination on basis that every person has potential within them for creativity
- Close encounters in more creative setting helps stimulate thinking through issues and closer working relationships.
- Promoting inclusion and identity
- Use of imagination, emotion and empathy away from technicist or instrumental approaches to learning - arts are primary channel of communication of emotions (Deleuze and Guttari (1987)
- Threshold theory – transformational learning
- Unlocking tacit knowledge, rehearsing sensitive scenarios
- Foucault's "authoritative gaze" – reliance on text based knowledge

Participation and Involvement in Professional Education

- Including people with a diversity of experiences
- Overcoming the practical challenges in involving older people
- Developing links with wider community through outreach to service users and their organisations
- Sustainability - more involvement with the community

"In social work education, more than in any other area, there are common aims between the individuals providing services, the teaching staff, the service users and the students. We should use these common aims to develop the courses together.
 (Service user) quoted in Branfield, (2007:1)

Wider disenfranchisement

- Impact of organisational policy and professional power in assessments

- Objectification and classification to get support – othering

- Defined in terms of 'complex needs' and 'dependency'

- Reductionist approach when people become dependent on services

Challenges in working with people with dementia

- aimed to address gaps in the curriculum

- challenge perceptions about the inabilities of people with dementia

- promote positive interaction, based on evidence of current policy, research and good practice

- highlighted in recent policy documents /clinical guideline 42 (2006) & National Dementia Strategy, Objective 13 *'An informed and effective workforce for people with dementia'* (DH Feb 2009).

The process

- Interdisciplinary partnership with LSBU, OT, nurse, social work, mental health staff, older actors
- Telephone interviews with carers (LSBU staff and contacts)
- Literature review – identified themes around communication
- Project team to build scenarios – rehearsing stories
- Briefing and engaging actors
- Sound recordist - recording stories
- Acting and photographing stories
- Editing and finishing
- OVER TO YOU!

Reflections so far

- Importance of leadership from older people in the learning process
- Facilitated active engaged learning in a more collaborative way and emphasized increased participation and empowerment of those involved.
- Touching on everyday ethical issues that we take for granted
- Enabling students to find their own solutions

Thank You for Listening

Please don't hesitate to contact me at:

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- Erik Meyer and Ray Land develop these ideas in Occasional Paper 4: Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge
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