Fostering Transformative Learning and Development of Practice: within Specialist Community Public Health Nursing curriculum from a philosophical perspective of Personhood

Overview: An articulation of key person-centred concepts in a post registration Masters level Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) curriculum based within the Division of Nursing at Queen Margaret University, Scotland, and the potential for transformative learning.

The Story: Throughout the learning journey of the programme students and facilitators are encouraged to explore personhood across the lifespan (from childhood to adulthood) and the connections and relationships between persons (children, young people, families, communities). Through situated and collaborative learning, research evidence is applied to devise person-centred interventions with a view to advancing and developing practice. An ongoing dynamic process of evaluation draws on formal student feedback, presentation of group work through creative methods such as poster presentations, poetry, artwork, reflective narratives, debates, and online discussions. There is a particular focus on the core module on child and family centred practice within the context of SCPHN (NMC 2004).

Methods: The programme was implemented in 2015-2016. A person-centred approach to facilitating learning was adopted. Critical and creative engagement with students in concept clarification and reflexivity was encouraged, together with examining the limits of approaches that focus exclusively either on the person or on the population. This brings to the fore the complexity of holistic assessment, judgement of limits of practice, and developing practice. There is a particular focus on the core module on child and family centred practice within the context of SCPHN (NMC 2004).

Results: The evaluation is ongoing. The group work and discussions were considered thought provoking; students on the programme seem to be gaining a deeper and broader understanding of child and family centred practice from a person-centred perspective. The link of theory to practice has been identified as one of the strengths, together with the emphasis on thinking critically on the exploration of personal values and beliefs, of personhood, and of child and family centred practice.

Conclusion: Part of the process of undertaking a programme of study as an adult learner, and engaging with the transition to a new professional identity, involves challenge to the assumptions, values and beliefs that each person brings with them. It brings into play the philosophical perspective of personhood, and what it feels and means to be a person (McCormack & McCance 2010). There are parallels between the person’s (as a child and young person) journey and the person’s (as a student) journey—emphasising the relationship between praxis and reflexivity and the potential for transformative learning and development of practice to take place.