

The skills agenda and lifelong learning; a collaborative model in one UK university

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UK

Session 4A

13/3/2010

In this paper the speakers discuss partnership working between educationists and clinicians, outlining a collaborative model used successfully to ensure continued skills development in nurses from pre qualifying student to consultant nurse. Addressed is the importance of progressive career pathways development in nursing culminating in a professional doctorate, the latter which is now seen as increasingly relevant to those working outside academe (Rolfe and Davies 2009) where nurses today assume diverse roles in a complex healthcare system creating new demands and expectations on the nursing profession (Yam 2005). Evidenced here is the importance of such collaborative working for effective career lifelong learning through clinical practice, education and combined approaches to supporting career development and learning opportunities.

Progression pathway mapping is not a new concept as evidenced by the NHS skills escalator model in the 1990’s developed for support staff with no professional qualifications (Walshe 2003); but this paper outlines a mapping of progression routes that are offered to those entering their career from the pre entry requisites required for undergraduate student nurses, including those routes which enable widening participation through to the higher level doctorate programme designed specifically for practicing nurses . Demonstrated is the vast spectrum of skill development opportunities that have been designed and developed through a career development framework in a partnership between one university and partners in practice from three major healthcare trusts. Shown are clear progression routes offered to the nurse wishing to maintain direct client/patient contact while ensuring that appropriate lifelong learning opportunities are available to ensure the necessary skill development in sustaining contemporary practice at whichever level of care delivery the practitioner is at.

In addition and as part of the career framework the speakers demonstrate how clinical practitioners are enabled to engage in activities through the 'clinical academic nurse' route for those not wishing to take up a full time career in education but nevertheless wish to take an active role in education. As the audience will see the opportunities to develop skills in teaching and research while keeping their practice role are many, including clinically based research.

In all the paper demonstrates how effective partnership working between educationists and partners in practice can be successful in developing and supporting the skills agenda through effective planning and delivery of this framework.