The Perceptions of Health and Social Care Students of using Mobile 360 Degree Performance Feedback Tools in Practice Placement Settings

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the students’ perspective of using mobile 360 degree performance feedback tools, in Health and Social Care (H&SC) practice placement settings. By using the tools students are able to record immediate, rich (360 degree) feedback of their performance from the different viewpoints of those involved in the assessment scenario. This included a large-scale implementation of mobile technology with over 900 users across a range of professions and clinical settings. The mobile assessment processes and tools are described and the outcomes of the second stage of an action research study related to the benefits and challenges of the mobile delivery are discussed. The authors conclude that mobile assessment delivers a promise for the future in terms of pedagogy and technology.

Keywords: Common Competences, Interprofessional Assessment, Mobile Performance Feedback, Practice Placement Learning, Work-Based Learning

INTRODUCTION

Practice-based learning is a core element of H&SC professional programmes and is an essential component for registration to practice. Moon (1999, p. 53) suggests that professional practice is based on a ‘network of knowledge’ acquired as a result of experiences in practice. Interprofessional education (IPE) is defined most often as ‘occasions when two or more
professions learn with, from and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care’ (CAIPE, 2002). IPE supports collaborative working by providing opportunities for students from different professions to gain an appreciation of each other’s skills, values and knowledge base and has become a common component of pre-registration programmes in the UK (Craddock, O’Halloran, Borthwick, & McPherson, 2006; Dearnley, Walker, & Fairhall, 2010). It is fundamental for the care of service users (i.e., patients/clients) within contemporary H&SC practice for all professionals to have a high level of professional competence in communication, teamwork, and ethical practice. Assessment of these common competences is increasingly found in IPE programmes (Simmons, Wagner, Ajedercies, & Reeves, 2010). Interprofessional assessment (IPA) of practice learning, whereby professionals assess students from other professions, is perhaps the natural progression from IPE (Dearnley et al., 2010). Reflection is well recognised for its importance in the learning process (Dearnley & Matthew, 2007; Gibbs, 1988; Johns, 2000), as is the role of self assessment in effective learning, for future professional development and lifelong learning (Boud 1995; Taras, 2000). Juwah, MacFarlane-Dick, Matthew, Nicol, and Smith (2004) suggested that good, timely feedback could encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem, closing the gap between current and desired performance and helping to clarify what good performance is (goal, criteria, standards expected).

The potential of mobile devices for learning and assessment is of increasing interest to the H&SC professions (Sandars & Pellow, 2006) and the wider higher education community (Anderson & Blackwood, 2004). The personal nature of mobile learning (m-learning) and the interactivity of this mode have been found to encourage learner engagement (Savill-Smith, Attewell, & Stead, 2006). Key features of m-learning are that it provides ‘just enough, just for me, just in time’ learning (Nycz & Dragon, 2005) often typically situated (in the workplace or field) and contextualised through interaction with tutor, mentor, or peers. Studies in health settings have been undertaken mainly in the USA and Australia and have focused on nurses (Miller et al., 2005), paramedics (Norman, 2005), and doctors (Scheck McAlearney, Schweikhart, & Medow, 2004). These studies investigated the use of mobile devices to provide access to information and assessed the usability of the devices for health care professionals. Walton, Child, and Blenkinsopp (2005) explored the perceptions of health care students regarding the use of mobile devices in the form of personal digital assistants (PDAs) in the community. They have been found to be an effective resource for students, especially for reference materials (Miller et al., 2005). Very few studies have assessed the effectiveness of PDAs for practice assessment and those that have been reported have mainly involved self assessment activities with medics (Bent et al., 2002; Engum, 2003) and nurses (Kneebone, Nestle, Ratasothy, Kidd, & Darzi, 2003; Koeniger-Donohue, 2008).

The ALPS Approach to Assessment of Common Competencies in H&SC Practice Placement Settings

The Assessment & Learning in Practice Settings (ALPS) programme involved five UK universities (the universities of Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds, Leeds Metropolitan, and York St John) and its National Health Service (NHS) partners comprising the Educational Commissioning, Yorkshire and Humberside Strategic Health Authority, clinical networks, professional and statutory regulatory bodies, and 16 H&SC professional groups. A key aim of the ALPS programme was to assist students to feel confident, as well as competent, at the start of their professional careers. ALPS aimed to achieve this by using interprofessional learning opportunities, common interprofessional assessment tools (to assess the Common Competences of Communication, Teamwork, and Ethical Practice), and an m-learning solution.
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