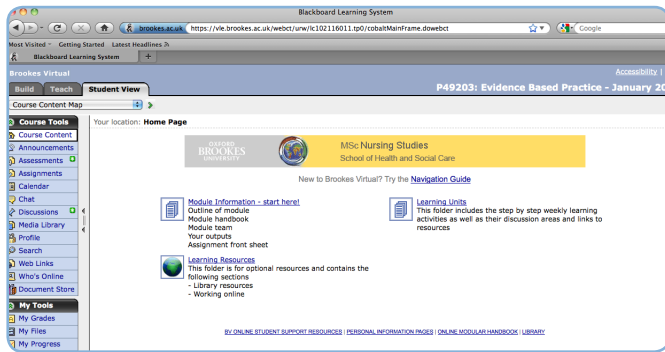


Evidence Based Practice, Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge: The perspectives and experiences of postgraduate nursing students in the UK and Hong Kong

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Brief Outline of context

Postgraduate Module in EBP, part of MSC in Nursing Studies, delivered online in UK and classroom based in Hong Kong.

Curriculum design influenced by:

- 14th Oxford Teaching Evidence Based Practice Course
- Oxford Centre for Staff Development (OCSLD) Course Design Intensive (CDI) workshop
- Learning objectives are aimed at developing evidence-based practitioners

Brief outline of problem

Participants from both settings evaluate content of module as highly relevant to clinical practice but consider that meeting the learning outcomes can be challenging.

A review of the literature suggests two potential themes, which could lead to the problem

- The extent to which evidence is effectively transferred to practice in real world settings (Waters et al, 2009)
- The need to find reliable strategies to teach EBP (Levin & Feldman, 2006, Melynk et al, 2008, Steurer, 2010)

The threshold concept approach has been applied effectively in a range of disciplines where ideas and knowledge may be difficult to understand (Biology and economics)

Mayer & Land (2003) identify seven features of a threshold concept, which are central to mastery of a subject.

Identification of threshold concepts could effectively enhance the EBP curriculum.



Assesment of problem and analysis of its cause

Completed coursework (reflective diaries, discussion board postings and assignments) are being used to develop a thematic analysis, using the threshold concept framework- this will be triangulated with focus group interviews in the UK and Hong Kong so that learners can identify the context of how their learning of EBP has developed and what remains as troublesome knowledge

Overall research question = “What are the threshold concepts associated with learning and applying the principles of evidence-based practice?”

Strategy for change Methodology will enable learners to identify difficulties within their understanding, which will influence future curriculum design and delivery.

Lessons learnt

Early analysis, suggests that a perception of being able to influence practice within a current clinical role can be transformative when learning about EBP.

‘Previously EBP is somewhat abstract in my concept, however after completing the module I got the knowledge that patients’ experience brings along research evidence in order to inform decision-making or practice’ (HK student)

‘Answering these questions enables me to ascertain the value of research studies in my day-to-day practice, thereby enabling me to make decisions about formulating a smoking cessation programme in the nurse-led clinic’ (HK student)

These learners appear to be better enabled to explore the challenges of applying evidence to practice

‘However it is not easy to change the practice of healthcare professionals since they are busy and reluctant to change because changes may slow down their efficiency of work and lengthen their time of work’ (HK Student)

Conversely some learners spend a great deal of time in a liminal space and the challenge for EBP tutors is to identify this and support learners to cope with the uncertainties of their knowledge and develop strategies to transform this.

Message for others (How you can get involved)

The main focus within the current literature about teaching and learning EBP emerges from the ‘expert’ perspective. Irvine & Carmichael (2009) suggest that threshold concepts may be conceptualized differently between the disciplines. The researchers, therefore would like to stimulate discussion and debate about how the threshold concept applies to other disciplines who teach and practice EBP. Please contact us with your thoughts and ideas. mwaite@brookes.ac.uk

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