An example of an Evidence-Based Information Literacy ‘Module’

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Using research methods which focus on investigating how health professionals actually experience Information Literacy in clinical practice, we can discover how and why information is used and what forms of contextual knowledge are needed and employed (Forster 2015a). From this an ‘experience framework’ can be formulated from which Information professionals can develop a comprehensive programme of scenario-based Information Literacy education. Health professionals or students can be made aware of when Information is needed in practice and how it can be found and applied to the proper effect.

An example of the framework for an intervention for nurses is given below, based on just such a research study (Forster 2015b)

The study found that Information Literacy was experienced in 7 contexts:

1. In processes of Professional Self development
2. In development and maintenance of Relationships with patients, patients’ families, colleagues and other professionals
3. Through its role in Helping to achieve ‘Best Practice’
4. Within Understandings and Experiences of Evidence Based Practive
5. Within application of Skills and Processes of evidence and other information gathering
6. Through understanding and knowledge of the principles and concepts behind evidence and other information gathering
7. Through applicable conceptions of information

Each context varied from simple to very complex experiences. E.g.: Theme 2. in which A is the simplest experience and F the most complex, Information Literacy is experienced in..

A. Interacting passively with others –others as a source of information

B. Interacting actively – a give and take of information

C. Developing functional relationships

D. Developing the trust of patients, families and colleagues

E. Developing a teaching role

F. Developing a leadership role

*The Proposed Module: Themes to be grouped for Variation*

The Variation theory of learning suggests learning occurs when some contexts of the information landscape are varied while others remain unvaried. We can take the Themes and group them for variation in order to generate learning activities. This can be done, for example, in the following ways:

* Theme 2: Relationships with patients, patients’ families, colleagues and other professionals and Theme 5: Skills and Processes of evidence and other information gathering.

What does it mean to relationships with other professionals and with patients and family to be able to employ a range of techniques to identify and locate information for them and to share with them in differing contexts? What does Information Literacy mean within these parameters? Addressing Information Literacy in these related contexts might involve scenario work in which colleagues or patients are described in terms of their background and knowledge need. The students would be required to search for relevant information and reflect on the consequences for that person of the nurse providing or not providing relevant information, and for the student’s relationship with them. Scenarios will vary in terms of the complexity of information and its potential significance to the patient. New Information Literacy experiences could involve both simple and complex relationships and information processes

* Theme 3: Helping to achieve ‘Best Practice’ and Theme 4: Understandings and Experiences of EBP.

This variation-grouping investigates the application of evidence by the nurse to her attempts to achieve the best practice possible. The latter can become more ambitious as the grasp of the role of evidence is expanded. This might be done by getting students to see how the accumulation of a more complex evidence-based knowledge contributes to, and is necessary for, achievement of such complex goals as ‘Patient Safety’.

* Theme 3 Helping to achieve ‘Best Practice’ with Themes 5 Skills and Processes of evidence and other information gathering and Theme 6: Understanding and Knowledge of the principles and concepts behind evidence and other information gathering.

This grouping would vividly show the contrasting effect of the varying complexity of experience of the skills and knowledge underlying effective information gathering, on the ability of Information Literacy to initiate the knowledge and wisdom needed to achieve such complex goals

* Theme 4: Understandings and Experiences of EBP, Theme 6: Understanding and Knowledge of the principles and concepts behind evidence and other information gathering and Theme 7: Information Literacy experienced through Applicable conceptions of information

This variation-grouping would thoroughly examine the understanding and meaning of Information and Information gathering in each function of EBP. A specific example might bring auditing and knowledge of search strategy and information as a source of deeper investigation into conjunction. What does Information Literacy mean when considered in terms of its role in audit; the varying conceptions of information used in Auditing; and the principles and concepts behind locating the information types that make auditing possible?

* Theme 1: Professional Self-development and Theme 3: Helping to achieve ‘Best Practice’

This variation grouping examines the personal (ethical?) responsibility of the nurse in various professional roles to strive for Best Practice and how Information Literacy links and forms the fabric of increasingly complex and valued professional roles and Best Practice outcomes.

* Theme 1: Professional Self-development ; Theme 2: Relationships with patients, patients’ families, colleagues and other professionals and Theme 7: Information Literacy experienced through Applicable conceptions of information

This group concentrates on the intimate relationship between professional role and relationships with others, in the context of how the information used and exchanged in that relationship is conceptualised. For example, information conceptualised as ‘A means of understanding a newly encountered clinical problem or phenomenon’, for a nurse ‘Becoming able to function non-dependently within the team’ while ‘Functioning as part of the multi-disciplinary team’.

Hence all 7 themes are covered.

Information professionals can base ‘scenario’ work on this framework, developing workshops in which the role of Information Literacy is shown through relevant examples of practice. ‘Skills’ training in such things as use of databases such as Medline can now have a meaningful context; a context which shows the real and considerable value of such skills.