

Partnership between higher education and working life - Developing a conceptual model

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The purpose of the ESR-funded Collaborative Intensity project (2008-2011) is to produce a partnership model between higher education and working life. The partnership model is being developed as a multidisciplinary collaboration between the hospital of the City of Espoo and Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. The focus will be on sharing expertise and knowledge, in addition to parallel development. Partnership enhances the sharing of the newest research information and the best practices, and group together the training and activities of social, rehabilitative and health care sectors in particular, along with their evaluation and development. The project aims to produce an innovative collaborative model for different organizations. It is based on functional coactive relations and learning environments which transcend boundaries. The new work model is intended to advance the collective recognition, use and development of know-how between different organizations. At the beginning stages of the project the partnership will operate through a pilot programme, in which work models based on the service idea of the newly planned hospital in Espoo will be developed for geriatric work. The pilot consists of three partially independent subprojects carried out at the Espoo hospital.

The collaboration and partnership of health care organizations and higher education have been depicted for decades in international literature. In spite of this, research information covering the subject is still rather sparse and the research is considered challenging. Partnership aims at offering new solutions for new problems, which no organization can overcome alone. Partnership requires a new paradigm and new cooperative practices. Partnership is used in various instances. There is no co-ordinated definition for it, nor have any widely tested work models been compiled to ensure its development

The aim of this presentation is to describe the conceptual work model as well as the development of the model. The partnership model and its development process will be presented in the action research, in which the principle, structural and processing factors of the model are recognized, evaluated and named. The results and their actualization will be evaluated with the help of experience gained from the project. The research for the project is divided into four phases (2009 – 2011) and the following research questions will be answered: What kind of partnership models have been developed for working life and higher education? How were they developed? Which factors advance and hinder the partnership? What kind of results have been achieved through development work?

Information retrieval and material analysis are performed through qualitative analysis. In the first stage, knowledge of the development of the partnership model was produced through a systematic literature review and the terminology for the model was recognized and named. Reference literature was searched in the Cinahl, PubMed and Eric databases for 1999-2009. The search yielded 1012 references, of which 205 abstracts were picked according to certain inclusive and exclusive criteria. Altogether 21 full texts were chosen for the final analysis. In the second stage an initial model for the partnership was created. A total of 31 persons from the partner organization took part in the focus group interviews. They were carried out in six groups. The interviews were performed during 2009.

The material was analyzed through qualitative content analysis. In the third stage the development of the partnership model was presented as well as specified and complemented through the experience gained from the project collaborations. A total of 29 persons took part in the focus group interviews carried out in four groups during the autumn 2010. In the fourth stage a presentation of the partnership model and its development process will be produced (autumn 2010 – spring 2011), and the presentation will be complemented by specialist feedback (spring 2011).

Based on the results of the literature review and the first focus group interview, features seen as advancing partnership included the arrangements of the co-operation, an ethical principles and culture of the organizations, work principles directing co-operation, management of change, and publicity. Features hindering co-operation were cultural differences between the organizations, prejudice, and the lack of respect, resources and mutual understanding. Partnership processes in the development and sharing of expertise transpired as unilateral cooperation or shared learning. Shared learning occurred in student guidance, the improvement of treatment work premised on demonstration, the advancement of leadership, and in collective training. For the sharing and developing of expertise, configurations of student guidance had been established.

The development of the model and its concepts will be presented at the conference.

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