

Reflection in action: ALPS tool enhances reflective practice

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Background

Reflective practice, as reflection on action (Schon 1995) is a process whereby after an event the details are recalled, analysed, evaluated and the lessons learnt are used to create a plan of action describing how the individual will enhance their practice.

Reflection on action however takes time to reflect and record, sometimes over many weeks or months, after when the moment for timely learning has passed. Those "difficult patients", "difficult cases" or areas for improvement in "professional practice" skills remain potentially unresolved for a time.

Reflection in action (at the time of the event), (Schon 1995) can give a more immediate enhancement of practice by making the reflective process more relevant and useful for the learner. Boud (2000) indicates that reflection in action can also lead to developing reflective skills into life-long learning skills. These are skills advocated in the BAA Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Reference Document (BAA 2007).

University of Leeds BSc Audiology students have previously been limited in their reflective practice development to self reporting, combined with feedback from a clinical educator or University tutor prior to the evaluating and planning stages. This captured information from only one or two sources.

Whilst on clinical placement Leeds students have now used the recently developed Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings (ALPS) tool, that takes immediate feedback from multiple sources.

ALPS is a student led assessment of the 3 Common Competences (professional practice skills shared across the healthcare professions) of Communication, Team Working and Ethical Practice (skills not identified in the electronic Individual Record of Clinical Practice). There is student self reporting, service user (patient), Educator, peer and other professional options for feedback capture.

Opportunities for assessment are identified by the student; the PC based assessment tools are completed by those present and uploaded by the student into their e-portfolio. This is accessed by the University Tutor to provide feedback. The student synthesises the feedback and condenses it into an action plan for how they will develop their skills to enhance their future performance.

As the feedback is given at a time close to the assessment event, the ALPS tool facilitates something close to reflection in action opportunity for the student. With student placements spread across Yorkshire and the North East, it can also give an element of distance learning. The University of Leeds BSc Audiology students have used two of the five available tools; 'Gaining consent from a service user' and 'Demonstrating respect for a service user' www.alps-cetl.ac.uk/tools.html. The professional practice skills demonstrable by ALPS are identified in competency maps www.alps-cetl.ac.uk/maps.html. (Holt et al 2010). These maps also accommodate the skills identified in the Professional Development Portfolio required to be evidenced by BSc Audiology graduates at the University of Leeds (ALPS 2010).

Student focus group feedback (ALPS 2010)

Enhance the student experience

ALPS structures facilitates reflection upon their performance

"if you're the kind of person who struggles to think about what you've done and reflect, then it's a more structured way and it actually makes you think quite specifically about certain aspects and really draw it out of you"

ALPS tool structure has enabled students to capture more comprehensive feedback.

Without structure, the feedback evidence gathering is potentially serendipitous.

"It's good that they've [ALPS] got structured questions or specific questions that you have to think about because the only other reflection that we do is just like free writing and so sometimes you might miss certain aspects and so it's quite good to have a structure so you probably think about what you've done."

Enhance feedback gathering from multiple-sources:

Novel viewpoints widen the reflective experience

"It's the only thing that we've had so far that's got the perspective from the patient side, rather than just the assessor or the placement educator"

"you might say; 'Oh, how did I do in the appointment?' and they [Educators] might like be; 'Fine' and that's not very helpful, so if you say; 'Can you fill this out?' they're answering specific questions about specific aspects of the appointment that they might not have said just conversationally"

Conclusions

ALPS enhances the acquisition of reflective practice skills in student Audiology practitioners.

ALPS format enables a comprehensive feedback capturing mechanism in a more timely and therefore more useful manner, for the students' professional practice skills development.

Multi-source feedback particularly, from the patient and peers, is identified as helpful to the students' learning.

Reflection in action through ALPS tool use can be an empowering experience for the student.

Further developments

Selected use of paper versions of the tool to widen opportunity of use in diverse clinical environments.

Further work is required in this area to identify the potential adaptation to CPD for existing experienced practitioners.

ALPS (Assessment & Learning in Practice Settings) is a collaboration of five Universities (Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds, Leeds Metropolitan and York St John) working together with 16 health and social care professions, the NHS, service users, carers and commercial partners to increase the competence and confidence of graduating health and social care students



The ALPS tool - multi-source feedback.....

.....like the different TV camera-angles at football matches

(Images supplied by <http://www.alps-cetl.ac.uk>)



Describe an interaction with a service user.

The interaction was a new patient who had been directly referred by their GP. During this interaction I lead the entire appointment, under supervision.

How did you obtain informed consent before proceeding with the course of action?

After introducing myself I explained exactly what I was going to be doing during the appointment, so that the patient fully understood. I then checked that what I had explained was ok with the patient before I continued.

Taking into account the level of your service user's understanding, how did you ensure that the service user understood the course of action?

By explaining fully why they were at the appointment and exactly what was going to happen during it.

Taking into account your service user's preferred method of communication, how did you ensure they gave or withheld consent?

By asking and checking at each stage of the appointment that what I was about to do was ok

What evidence did you get from the service user that they understood the course of action?

They responded accordingly and did everything that I asked of them. They were not alarmed or distressed by any aspect of the appointment and understood what was explained

A returned ALPS assessment

References

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