

Chapter 5 Summary and Conclusion

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This monograph outlines the process and results of development of a common educational programme at masters level in health and social care management, which was supported by the Erasmus Life Long Education project CareMan (Culture and Care Management). The CareMan project brought together university partners actively involved in educating social and health care professionals in leadership and management at master's level in Europe. The five partners of the consortium were Lahti University of Applied Sciences – Lahti UAS (administrative and academic coordinator, Finland), Charles University – CU (the Czech Republic), Edinburgh Napier University – ENU (Scotland), Hammeline University of Applied Sciences – HAMK (Finland), and University of Évora – UoE (Portugal).

The objectives of the project were to achieve lower-level educational goals that included the development through education cultural and value-driven leadership, quality of care and quality management to effectively manage an integrated health and social care service. Through mapping the situation in the field and comparing curricula of all participating universities the overall aim was to develop a joint masters programme in social and healthcare management.

After the detailed understanding of national and institutional specifics of each of the individual academic entities it was recognised that, due to a number of regulation issues, the original aim was not achievable. Following subsequent analytical work, it was decided to develop a set of three master's level modules. At the end of the project it was intended that all created modules would be available virtually to the participating programmes and would contribute some added value to existing curricula. In the future these ready-to-use modules are intended to be taught in cooperation with the participating universities or as a separate module in each university.

The chosen theoretical framework of the project that underpinned the development, management and evaluation of the inter-cultural educational provision relied on the combination of two learning theories – 'cooperative collaborative and social learning' and 'transformational' (Mezirow, 2009). This theoretical framework helped to align with European collaborative policy and its application on all levels of implementation of the project.

Developing educational modules required initial analytical work to be conducted by the team. Because the project was to be implemented in collaboration between educational institutions, the collaboration had to be based on methodological approach of the analyses, which mainly relied on comparisons.

The analytical process was conducted in three stages: focus groups with graduate students who were also practitioners to identify key learning requirements; curriculum comparison based on framework analysis adapted from the European Tuning Project; and identification of a cross-sectional skills matrix that would underpin the development of the learning outcomes for module development.

The analytical work in mapping the situation and curriculum comparison brought data and findings that further supported and even better specified the lower-level objectives and helped to formulate content goals. An inductive process of the project management group led to decisions on what content of the modules might be most efficient and also feasible within the available time

and resources to achieve the overall educational objectives. The outcome of the inductive decision-making process of the project management group (PMG) was the proposal to develop three modules: *Human Resource Management and Knowledge Management*, *Quality Management and Intercultural management*, each for 10 ECTS credits.

As a result of the theoretical and organisational framework and analytical phase of the project, four strategies informed the development and implementation of the modules:

- i. Collaboration as a principle stemming from EU collaborative policy and receiving its expression on all implementation levels (designing the modules, modes of learning, delivering the modules, evaluation process).
- ii. Building on the Bologna process masters level framework to assure appropriate academic level of outputs.
- iii. Development of value-based leadership of students through transformational learning in cross-cultural settings and continual reflection of theory in practice.
- iv. Continual evaluation and feedback among teachers and students as a strategy to achieve a high quality programme.

All three modules were collaboratively designed and piloted during 2015 and 2016. Each module was led by one university, but members from all other universities participated in the development and delivery of the modules. The Bologna process masters level framework and related standards and guidelines informed the form and method of designing the modules.

A module proforma and guidance notes were prepared and used for this project based on the Bologna process, ECTS User Guide and Tuning guidance, which details that the following information should be available. This included the target group, ECTS level and all prerequisites; the learning outcomes of the module and the educational activities to meet the requirements of learning outcomes; and types of assessments to meet the learning outcomes and overall hours needed for the module (Gonzalez & Wagnaar, 2005). Each module was hosted by one university but all modules were assessed by a common quality assurance process. The agreement to adopt a universal module descriptor ensured that there was consistency across the modules in terms of aims, objectives, learning, teaching and assessment strategies and references to appropriate literature. The use of the specially designed part of the online space Moodle/Reppu at Lahti UAS also helped to provide consistency.

Finally, assessment procedures of the students' learning were specifically designed towards application of theory to practice and the use of real practice issues. The quality of the students' outcomes has become an important source of the evaluation of the efficiency of the programme. A continual feedback and long-lasting evaluation process also helped inform the teachers and project management group about the results of each phase of the project and enabled them to make changes in the following module design and delivery. Based on the findings from the analytical phase and evaluation of the modules and project management process, conclusions in the form of recommendations for future development of similar programmes will be formulated.

Recommendations

a) Intercultural Sensitivity Support

Findings

The sharing of culturally diverse experience in practice appears to be one of the main benefits of this programme. Although this benefit was mentioned in all modules, guided reflection and continual group work and discussion during intensive weeks was necessary for students to start to understand the specific intercultural aspects influencing everyday situations in practice.

Recommendation

The transformational design of education of future managers in interculturally mixed groups in combination with guided theoretically informed reflection led to higher focus on and sensitivity to intercultural issues. This leads to new approaches to analysis and problem-solving in social and health care human resource management and quality management. The cross-cultural setting during intensive weeks and continual reflection of theory in practice strengthen the ability to develop intercultural sensitivity and grasping of theoretical concepts in their meaning for practice. This should be supported by continual evaluation and feedback among teachers and students.

b) Realistic Planning in Intercultural Settings

Findings

Both students and teachers referred to difficulties and a higher level of stress in communication and collaboration with different cultural group members and using language that was not native to them. It required more time and energy to overcome the barrier of diversity and experience the benefits mentioned above.

Recommendation

The positive effect of intercultural communication and collaboration must be achieved by dedicating more time and securing more energy for meetings, discussion about concepts and diverse learning and teaching styles, etc. The understanding of country level differences and their impact on situations and common planning should not be underestimated in planning any project activity. Considerations could include timetabling or co-facilitation of sessions or other activities if requested, which help save energy of the teachers.

c) Special Care for Instruction in Intercultural and Online Spaces

Findings

Intercultural communication and collaboration challenges all kinds of preliminary understanding on which people build their learned behaviour and expectations from others. This was often a source of misunderstanding and conflicts among team members, followed by blame apportioned to a lack of rules and instructions and calls for more expressive and tighter leadership and guidance.

Recommendations

In intercultural settings, special care should be given to discussing and explaining all procedures and instructions, showing how to use online spaces and materials, repeating instructions in a number of innovative ways (written, video, pictures, Skype, etc.), and being available for questioning and searching for information, etc. Clear guidelines on what is expected of students in terms of pre-reading and assessment delivery in English should be available well in advance of starting the module. Additionally, online discussion groups could encourage more participation from students and provide opportunities to reflect and clarify the content of their written posts. Given the reported difficulty of understanding the written word, navigating REPPU, and facilitating different learning styles, it is recommended that verbal presentation of core information in all three modules is incorporated. This would include oversight of REPPU, REPPU learning materials, assessment strategy and an explanation of assessment criteria.

d) Clear Roles in Leadership Including Educational Project Leader

Findings

Teachers felt uncertain in several situations, regarding what their roles were and who was responsible for which task. This raises tension as individuals do not always ensure time for certain tasks when others might expect it. Although in each module a clear leader was appointed, it was felt during evaluation that a position of educational leader for all modules might help to reduce the level of uncertainty in such processes of responsibility.

Recommendation

There should be clear management roles identified in relation to module delivery, for example the role of a programme leader or module coordinator who takes responsibility for/oversees the overall smooth running of all the modules and is the key point of communication for those delivering the modules. Clear guidance should be provided for the role of the module leaders to support them in the development and delegation of module preparation and implementation.

e) Innovative Ways to Support Communication in English

Findings

The use of English by non-native speakers was often experienced as an obstacle to understanding, due to different accents and ways of using the language. This was often a source of misunderstanding, lower ability to provide feedback or to understand fully the process of communication. It also required a special extent of energy to listen and to strive to understand.

Recommendation

It is necessary to acknowledge that a certain level of knowledge of English language is a preliminary requirement for common communication and cooperation in a multicultural setting. Based on some tested level of knowledge, special care and innovative ways of support in communication to non-native speakers should be part of the projects. It is vital that staff interact competently with students in a way that builds confidence in their use of the English language and interacting

with peers. However, although a reasonable level of competence is required in written and spoken English by both the teachers and students, minor grammatical errors are common and acceptable.

Final remarks

The main objective of the joint programme, which finished with the development of three modules, aimed to address and “answer societal needs” (Resende da Silva et al, 2015, p. 587) common to European countries (mainly those involved in the project) and intended to produce at the end of the process a set of core common competencies needed in future, at European level that can be useful to health and social care leaders. For that we share different backgrounds, experiences, interests, core competencies, and cultures, trying to develop a coherent, multicultural and cross-cultural curriculum in Health Care Administration at a European level, maintaining the strong commitment of all involved, updated with recent knowledge and with the best evidence available.

It was considered that highly specialised knowledge was taught in the three developed modules, some of which was at the forefront of knowledge in the field of study and work and therefore could become the basis for original thinking and/or research. Conditions to enhance critical awareness of knowledge issues in the field and at the interface between different fields were created. It was hoped that students should be well prepared to take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams. It was felt that with this programme a good base of experience and knowledge to develop other projects in the European area, approaching practices in health and social care, could be harmonised with the best evidence.

The project team believe that the modules have several elements with the potential to make an impact on social and health care services. It is hoped this will not only widen the knowledge base of the participants but also help cross-fertilise current approaches to lead to truly European and novel ways to tackle the pressing social and healthcare managerial challenges.

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