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Introduction: themes, issues and conclusions

Chapter Overview

This introductory chapter briefly maps out for you the structure of the book and explains who the book is for and how it might be used. It talks you through the key themes, issues and conclusions of specific chapters and identifies how each chapter will discuss particular concepts, structures and relationships of multi-disciplinary working. Each chapter includes a combination of interrelated academic content, case studies, key definitions and practical activities. The connections between this content are discussed in this chapter in order to demonstrate to you the integrated nature of the text. The overall aim of the book is to act as a helpful framework for developing your practice and therefore this chapter explains the relevance of each chapter for you so that you can clearly grasp why the book raises a specific theme, discusses a particular argument and unpacks a certain issue.



The book, its concept, why it is needed and who it is for

Studies on multi-professional working have found that some professionals feel ill-prepared for integrated working and have a lack of knowledge/skills concerning the management and leadership

of integrated multi-professional services (Davis and Hughes 2005). Policies in the area of children and family services have advocated a more joined-up outcomes-based approach to service delivery that has to be underpinned by more precise processes of referral, recording, information sharing, assessment, management, planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation (Walker 2008). Over a number of years we have worked with undergraduate students, postgraduate students and professionals involved in continual professional development to help them to develop their knowledge, values, skills and practices concerning multi-professional working. This book brings together our understandings that have developed from this experience with the findings of research and evaluation projects that we have carried out in order to clarify how such changes can be introduced in multi-professional working.

When working with learners we noticed that, whatever their position (student, practitioner, manager), they experienced uncertainty regarding multi-professional processes. We realised there was a need for a book that informed students about the contexts they were about to work in, that encouraged existing practitioners to see themselves as leaders, that persuaded managers to consider how they could develop supportive and innovative processes in their organisations and examined how multi-professional learning could foster innovation and creativity (a key issue in Chapter 7).

We had particularly noticed when working with undergraduate students on the new part-time BA Childhood Practice in Scotland (e.g. early years managers, educational welfare officers, family support workers, residential care workers and out-of-school managers) that we were asking them to question the processes and practices of multi-professional working in a context where their line managers and colleagues were as confused as them about the implications of new integrated agendas in children and family services.

We realised that we needed a book that involved work place activities that could be used beyond the university classroom to help not just our students but also their colleagues to better understand the context of their work (this idea was substantiated by the findings of the CREANOVA project discussed in Chapter 7). For example, we developed problem and scenario-based learning resources that enabled different types of staff to sit and discuss specific cases.

These approaches were particularly useful when we carried out continual professional development in local authorities (with

educational professionals, social workers, health visitors, health therapists, school nurses, mental health nurses, general practitioners, etc.). However, we were also struck by the hierarchical nature of multi-professional groups and came to the conclusion that we had to promote learning approaches that encouraged students to see themselves as leaders whatever their role/title and to work in less top-down ways (this issue is explored throughout the book but specifically in Chapters 4 and 5). In particular we noticed that when students evaluated their services/practices hierarchical ideas sometimes led them to utilise top-down approaches to evaluation that prevented them engaging with participatory approaches (this issue is returned to in Chapters 3 and 6). Similarly, when we worked with diverse groups of students on our masters courses (e.g. principle teachers and teachers of guidance/learning support, language support teachers, social workers, community educators, etc.) we realised they had different conceptual starting points from which to develop their approaches to joint multi-professional working.

Our experience suggested to us that there was a need for a book that could be utilised by students, practitioners and managers to help them clarify their tensions, contradictions and frustrations concerning issues of information sharing, joint assessment and decision-making that they encountered on a daily basis (issues raised in Chapter 2). Therefore this book has been written for students and existing professionals in health, education and social work services to actively use as part of academic qualifications (e.g. during placement, workplace learning or joint multi-professional units/modules), continual professional training courses (e.g. that seek to develop on-the-job knowledge about multi-professional working) and workplace team meetings (e.g. that are trying to plan strategies to enable better participatory working with service users). Our hope is that the book will act as a positive stimulus for the development of discussions, processes and practices that lead to greater and more integrated multi-professional services.

The structure of the book

This book employs a range of case studies to question issues of integrated multi-professional working. Each case study has been chosen because it enables us to question different concepts, structures and relationships of multi-professional working from within the process rather than from any specific professional subject area. Each of the case studies utilises our experience of working, researching and

evaluating in multi-disciplinary settings to pose you questions about your practice and the practice of others in order that you can begin to analyse the concepts, structures and relationships that underpin your work.

Each chapter includes three activities which ask you to reflect on issues that have been discussed; however, the book does not specifically provide answers to the questions posed in each chapter's activities because we are very critical of rigid techniques – we want to avoid the potential for dogmatic acceptance of our ideas and believe that your answers will be different depending on the contexts within which you work. Therefore, we encourage you to avoid taking our ideas for granted, to be critical of our writing and to question our thoughts, preconceptions and positions.

Chapter 2 Multi-professional assessment, planning and delivery

It has been argued that there is conflicting evidence concerning the utility of tools of joint assessment, that too much focus has been put on child protection/regulatory process in children and family services and that workers do not have sufficient knowledge of early intervention approaches (Munroe 2011). It has been suggested that more emphasis needs to be placed on learning opportunities that develop practitioners knowledge and skills concerning multi-professional assessment and early intervention (Munroe 2011). This chapter seeks to increase your understanding of multi-professional assessment, planning and delivery by examining a case study of Dunlean local authority where a specific situation escalated into an acute child protection referral. (Note that Dunlean is a fictitious local authority we have constructed. However, its processes are drawn/amalgamated from actual evaluations we have carried out in a number of Scottish local authorities.)

The chapter asks you to consider the Dunlean example when analysing the difference between deficit and more contemporary strengths-based approaches to children, families and communities. It argues that strengths-based approaches require you to recognise the system in which the children and families live and require you to avoid working with children/parents in isolation from each other. It specifically encourages you to attempt to support service users in their communities, balance issues of autonomy, enable shared decision-making, question standardised approaches, engage with the politics

of service delivery and ensure that service users experience trusting and flexible services.

The chapter frames the case study with a discussion of policies on assessment that have called for earlier intervention in families problems, promoted ideas concerning shared multi-professional assessment, advanced the notion of standardised record keeping across agencies and advocated the idea that a lead professional will be accountable. The chapter concludes by suggesting that you need to consider a complex interplay of conceptual, structural and relational issues when developing the practice of early intervention and that the shift to strengths-based approaches requires you to balance individual/shared judgement, build strong local relationships, have clearly defined procedures and have a committed approach to seeking out/sharing information in your work. It specifically concludes that in the case of Dunleau, more effort should have been put into developing at an earlier stage an understanding of the views of the children and adults involved. This issue of service user participation is revisited in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 Participation and multi-professional working

Chapter 3 contains a case study of a one point multi-disciplinary children and family service in an English local government setting. The case study is included with the kind permission of Liam Cairns at Investing in Children. The chapter discusses the different definitions of participation that have emerged within Childhood Studies, considers different structures/spaces of participation and offers you advice on how you can enable children to more systematically collaborate with adults, professionals and communities in processes of decision-making. The chapter encourages you to recognise the resources that service users' possess, to utilise processes of participation to jointly establish outcomes, to balance the development of mechanisms of participation with more relational approaches and to create spaces to collaboratively analyse the diverse meanings of multi-professional service delivery.

The chapter connects different approaches to participation that are employed by Investing in Children such as agenda days, staff development programmes, collaborative membership schemes, information/research sharing, etc., to the need to enable service users to experience different types of outcomes including rights, local conflict resolution, stronger relationships, moral responses,

recognition of injustice, social integration, social dynamism, the redistribution of resources and the removal of structural barriers such as transport and housing issues. The chapter demonstrates that participation processes need to be proactive and well resourced. It argues that the values of participation need to be embedded into organisational structures/cultures but it also points out that the first and simplest form of participation involves face-to-face discussion between professionals and service users.

You are encouraged to consider the relevance of Investing in Children's approach for your organisation, for example whether the approaches Investing in Children use to embed practice such as training, conceptual analysis, group membership and collaborative knowledge sharing have any value for you. You are also encouraged to consider what a culture of participation would look like in your organisation, to analyse whether people at different levels in your organisation have a commitment to social justice, diversity and thoughtfulness, and how you can support your organisation to practise the ideas of participation at different levels (e.g. with service users, practitioners, team leaders and senior management). The chapter concludes by encouraging you to adopt relational and collaborative approaches to multi-disciplinary service development that challenge subjective and hierarchical ideas concerning service users' abilities, view each participant as having their own type of expertise, balance formality/flexibility, question traditional organisational hierarchies, reject manipulative 'market choice' approaches to participation and confront deficit model approaches of exclusion. These ideas are picked up in Chapter 4 that investigates where the ideas that promote organisational hierarchy have come from.

Chapter 4 Traditional structures of multi-professional leadership and management

Chapter 4 draws from a case study of the development of a multi-disciplinary children and family service in 'Pentesk' Council in Scotland to demonstrate that hierarchical cultures in multi-professional services can foster:

- an unwillingness on the part of some professionals to move from outdated concepts of assessment
- the imposition of barriers to information sharing

- problems concerning recruitment and retention
- vested interests and traditions blocking change.

The chapter asks you to consider different concepts of and types of individual, group and professional leadership/management. It raises questions concerning issues of practice, policy, organisation and structure and contrasts technical rational ideas of leadership/management with more relational approaches. The central aim of the chapter is to help you understand the restrictions of traditional command and control types of leadership and management (e.g. that they lead to blame cultures) and encourage you to begin to think about alternative relational approaches. It concludes (in keeping with Chapter 2) that you need to balance individual and collective ideas of leadership in multi-professional settings and by encouraging you to engage with relational approaches to leadership and organisational change, suggests that you can adopt a leadership role whatever your position in an organisation or community. This idea is returned to in Chapter 5 in relation to systemic approaches to service development.

Chapter 5 Contemporary approaches to multi-professional leadership and management

This chapter encourages you to promote change/development in your organisation that enables a range of people (children, parents, staff, etc.) to take leadership roles. It further develops the case study from Pentesk to analyse the different conceptual, structural and relational aspects of leadership and management and to encourage you and your colleagues to develop more reflexive, plural, responsive, integrated and multi-professional work spaces. It argues that over time relational approaches to service assessment and planning at Pentesk enabled coordinated multi-professional working to emerge in the integrated teams and forums (e.g. through joint training, trust-building processes, knowledge-sharing, joint problem-solving, etc.).

This chapter (in keeping with Seddon 2008 and Munroe 2011) also argues that we should employ ideas from systems theory to reduce waste in multi-professional services. It suggests that we should shift our focus from cuts to developing improved service outcomes and argues that waste in the system was reduced at Pentesk by developing and embedding flexible structures (common processes rather than identities) that enabled collective, diverse, reflexive, discursive and complex decision-making. It concludes that you can gain benefits

from examining the complexity of local contexts; thinking about leadership as a variable thing; recognising that leadership can involve local consensus rather than top-down change and recognising the importance of dialogue, language and communication (Lawler and Bilson 2010).

Chapter 6 Multi-professional evaluation

This chapter further develops the notion of collective/collaborative reflexivity established in Chapter 5 and returns to the idea of participatory evaluation first discussed in Chapter 3. The chapter contrasts different structural approaches to research and evaluation with collective participatory and interrelational approaches. The chapter critically examines a case study of a Welsh multi-agency inclusion project evaluation carried out by an external consultant to consider what a more embedded approach to evaluation might look like. It critiques deficit type performance indicators (associated with total quality management) and contrasts them with outcomes developed through community dialogue. The chapter concludes by encouraging you to move beyond notions of performance and inspection to develop collaborative evaluations of services based on service users' experiences, participants' capacities and the idea that all partners in multi-professional services can locally contribute to the co-construction of collaborative knowledge and learning networks across multi-professional settings. The idea of collaborative learning networks is further explored in Chapter 7 which also revisits the idea from Chapter 5 that multi-professional working should involve collaborative innovation and creativity.

Chapter 7 Multi-professional learning and creativity

This chapter utilises findings from the Creanova Research Project (a major EU project funded under the Transversal Research element of the Lifelong Learning Programme European Commission Project No. 143725-LLP-1-2008-1-ES-KA1-KA1SCR that involved universities, regional governments and learning-design specialists). It analyses one of the CREANOVA case studies: an evaluation of a multi-professional mentoring course developed by the University of Edinburgh that was run in collaboration with the Coalition of Child Care Umbrella Organisations, the Scottish Social Services Council and the Scottish government.

The chapter encourages you to recognise that group processes can enable you to stimulate your individual creativity, that sharing enables you to draw on the creativity of others, that there are benefits to be gained from working with a range of people with different types of experience and that there are different structures, processes and relationships of dialogue in multi-professional settings. It suggests professionals that hide their feelings, errors or uncertainties (in an effort to keep up an apparently professional appearance) are actually unprofessional, that it is impossible as human beings for us to be perfect machines and therefore it is important within processes of professional development for you to examine your own preconceptions and those of your colleagues if we are to create collaborative and interrelational approaches to learning in multi-professional services that free up all participants (e.g. children, staff and managers) from processes of professional oppression.

The chapter connects ideas from the CREANOVA project concerning need, freedom, environment, interaction and design to discussions of professional learning to suggest that there is much to be gained from anti-hierarchical, interactive and collaborative multi-professional learning. It argues that innovation and creativity are embodied and embedded processes and that attempts to develop creative and innovative public services will benefit greatly from the understanding that creativity is not simply the domain of individual geniuses but is a capacity that we all possess that comes out most quickly when we interact with others in focused activities.

We hope that you enjoy the book as much as we have enjoyed writing it and actively use it with colleagues in your workplace. For, as Chapter 7 states, there is much to be gained from multi-professional collaboration and learning.