

Evaluating appreciative inquiry as a teaching method within a problem-based learning curriculum

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Background

This was a collaborative study on innovation in teaching with the University of Cardiff. The participants comprised all of the Year 1 students on an Occupational Therapy BSc programme, all the teaching staff on that programme, and a sample of practice educators from the students' clinical areas.

The Occupational Therapy Department at Cardiff had just introduced appreciative inquiry (AI), a method used in organisational behaviour, as a teaching method in a problem-based learning programme. The purpose of the project was to evaluate this method of teaching and the usefulness of combining appreciative inquiry with problem-based learning, and if it works at Cardiff, to introduce this method to CCCU on the new Interprofessional Learning (IPL) programme.

Approach/methodology

Student focus groups and staff interviews focused on their experience of AI. The results were collated with the results from a questionnaire administered by the Occupational Therapy Department at Cardiff.

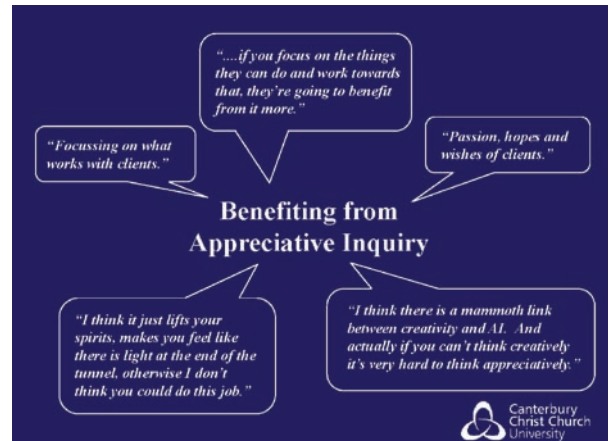
Following the first phase of the study, the project moved on to develop some of the ideas which had emerged from the analysis of the data, particularly that staff wanted to make changes to the way in which AI was taught and that the role of practice educators is very influential. Detailed discussions were held with the staff at Cardiff and with practice educators.

This second phase of the research was timely because the first cohort of students had been on placement again and some changes had been made to the delivery of AI with the second cohort.

Outcomes

The project was useful in enabling an evaluation of a novel teaching method, both on campus and in Occupational Therapy clinical placements. It allowed staff, students and practice educators to reflect on and consider how to develop AI for the best outcomes for their clients.

Quotations from student transcripts:



Three national conference papers have been given on this project, enhancing the reputation of CCCU and reinforcing the importance of supporting RIT.

A conversation between Rona and Rupert arising from examining the findings:

RR: Why do you think that the lecturers who participated said that introducing the AI approach was not research based, and therefore was questionable, while the practice educators on placement had no problems with this?

RK: Because in teaching we are used to using research evidence to justify what we do, whereas in health practice they carry on as usual unless there is evidence to prove they shouldn't do it.

Advice for others

Working across universities has its own challenges, but is very exciting, interesting and worthwhile. Always check their ethics committee requirements at an early stage. Also, make sure that the commitment of each university is clear, both for time and resources.

There are several websites on AI, and David Cooperrider has written copiously on the topic.

Reflections and any future plans

The new IPL programme at CCCU has introduced AI for some Occupational Therapy modules. It would be very useful to have this evaluated.

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