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## Whose role is it anyway? maximising the impact of continuing professional development on practice

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## **Whose role is it anyway? Maximising the impact of continuing professional development on practice**

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### *Introduction (5 minutes)*

In this symposium, we explore the complexities associated with maximising the impact of learning beyond registration on healthcare practice. Over the last two decades, there has been significant investment in continuing professional development (Department of Health, 2010) and yet the responsibility for ensuring returns on this investment in terms of meeting organisational targets and delivering better patient care is still not well understood or articulated (Mackinnon Partnership, 2007). Despite claims of the importance of lifelong learning (see, for example, Hardwick and Jordan, 2002; Atack, 2003; Clark, 2008), there is limited robust evidence to support such assertions. Most of the empirical studies that have been undertaken are small scale and limited to a single presentation of a single educational programme (e.g. Dierckx de Casterlé *et al.*, 2008; Lin *et al.*, 2008). Against a backdrop of major financial cutbacks across the public sector in the UK and other countries, there is increasingly an imperative to target resources effectively, and to demonstrate value for money and quality outcomes for service users.

Of relevance to educationalists, healthcare practitioners, students and commissioners, the objectives of the symposium are to:

- examine critically the literature concerning the evaluation of CPD, highlighting the associated complexities
- provide an overview of the development of the Impact on Practice (ImP) framework and the role of the student, their manager, their employing organisation and the education provider in enhancing the opportunities for CPD to impact on practice
- outline our approach to evaluating the ImP framework, including the rationale for adopting realist evaluation to determine what works for whom and under what circumstances

- present the evaluation findings and their implications for service providers, education providers and for education commissioning policy and practice.

We will achieve these objectives through the presentation of three inter-related papers and discussion with participants.

Paper 1

**Mission impossible? Using the experiences of others to develop our thinking** (Jan Draper, 20 minutes)

This paper commences with a critical exploration of the literature assessing the impact of CPD on practice. Although the importance and complexity of evaluating the effectiveness of professional education programmes has been debated (Eraut, 1994; Bates, 2004; Ellis and Nolan, 2005; Spencer, 2006) and despite increasing interest in this area, little significant progress has been made over the past decade. This lack of progress is apparent within the education and management literature, as well as in health care, and reflects the challenges and complexities involved (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2007).

From the literature review, we conclude that there is a need to examine the effectiveness of CPD from a more pluralistic perspective than has previously been the case.

Following consultation with a range of stakeholders, the ImP framework was developed. This framework aims to maximise the impact of learning on practice by identifying the specific roles of the organisation, the manager and the education provider, as well as the student in this process. Although the framework has been well received at a number of conferences and workshops over the past two years, its usefulness can only be fully assessed through an evaluation of its practical application in the workplace.

Paper 2

**Using realist evaluation to explore the use of the ImP framework in practice** (Shelagh Sparrow, 20 minutes)

This paper explores the use of a realist approach to evaluate the use of the ImP framework in practice. Realist evaluation enabled us to explore the contextual

issues associated with use of the framework and how different roles and experiences impact on potential outcomes (the process), rather than focusing solely on the outcomes in isolation (Greenhalgh *et al.*, 2009).

With funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England Innovation Fund (HEIF 4) and the East of England Strategic Health Authority, the evaluation was carried out in two hospitals and one community trust located in one county in the east of England. Students, managers, board members and education providers were interviewed to explore the relevance of the framework and to identify areas where the views of one group did not match the reality experienced by another. In particular, this paper will examine how we have sought to achieve rigor by:

- defining and justifying the case (the courses/the role of the student/the workplace)
- achieving immersion (collecting sufficient data from a variety of sources to understand what is going on)
- encouraging reflexivity between researchers and between researchers and participants
- looking for contrasting explanations/interpretations between cases (e.g. courses)
- supporting claims with evidence.

This paper will conclude with a reflection on the extent to which realist evaluation enabled us to examine what works for whom and under what circumstances (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

Paper 3

**Maximising impact: The implications for service providers, education providers and education commissioning** (Liz Clark, 25 minutes)

The final paper outlines the strengths and limitations of the latest version of the ImP framework. We also consider how this framework can be used to influence the extent to which knowledge and skills gained through CPD can be used to enhance practice.

In particular, this paper focuses on:

- the factors identified as either enabling or disabling the use of the ImP framework in practice
- the impact of organisational culture on the use of the framework and the implications of this for enhancing practice
- the extent to which theory and practice links established within CPD modules influence a learner's ability to apply their learning
- the relationship between the role and status of the learner within the organisation and his/her ability to implement or consolidate change in practice.

We also examine the 'swampy lowlands' of undertaking an evaluation project in England during a time of significant upheaval, reorganisation and uncertainty within the NHS. This led to significant challenges in recruiting healthcare professionals, the majority of whom were already having to juggle the competing demands of study and working in pressurised healthcare environments, as well as hectic non-working lives with carer responsibilities. (985 words)

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