Creating a Positive Learning Environment

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  – 3 step process

• Beginning and during the placement
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  – How to maintain the positive learning environment

• Post placement management

Positives!!

• ‘In certain health care settings, stressed & overworked staff have less time for students & may perceive them to be an additional burden or problem’ (Andrews et al. 2005, Brodie et al. 2005)

To create and sustain a positive learning environment

• Pre-placement management

• Beginning and during placement

• Post placement management

Pre-placement Management

• Step 1: Evaluation of yourself as a mentor

• Step 2: Evaluation of the organisation as a learning environment

• Step 3: Evaluation of the student in relation to the placement learning experience
Step 1: Evaluation of yourself as a mentor

- Identify your personal strengths and weaknesses as a mentor and suggest strategies for overcoming any weaknesses
- Use a SWOT analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Harmful</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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Step 1: Evaluation of yourself as a mentor

- Therapy Project Office – Practice Educator Competencies
  - 1. Education
  - 2. Supervision
  - 3. Assessment / Evaluation
  - 4. Professional Practice
  - 5. Management / Administration

Step 2: Evaluation of your department as a learning environment

- Identify the external factors that can affect the running of a clinical learning experience (Repeat SWOT analysis for this purpose)
- Maximise the opportunities and minimise the threats
- By planning your placement around these factors, you can maximise the potential for learning in your clinical environment

Characteristics of good practice educators according to students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Approachable</td>
<td>48 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Knowledgeable</td>
<td>35 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Friendly</td>
<td>22 (5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Good listener/advisor</td>
<td>22 (5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Patient/helpful</td>
<td>18 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Encouraging</td>
<td>18 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Supportive/honest &amp; fair</td>
<td>9 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Motivating &amp; energetic</td>
<td>9 (2)</td>
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Step 2: Evaluation of your department as a learning environment

- Stakeholders
  - Universities / HEIs
  - Placement providers
  - Practice Educators
  - Students
- Guidelines
  - Preparation for placement
  - During the placement
  - Following the placement

Strengths
- Large teaching hospital
- Long hx taking students
- Lots of staff willing to offer placements
- Same site as college, library ...

Weaknesses
- No car parking facilities for students
- Little dedicated space for students
- Lack of private space for feedback to students

Opportunities
- Hydro, Surgery, ANP’s in A+E, Classes, Fracture clinics

Threats
- Staff shortages
- Heavy workload
- Seriously ill patients
- Vaccinations

Therapy Project Office – Guidelines for Good Practice in Practice Education
Step 3: Student Evaluation

- Background, previous experience and skills
- Learning styles questionnaire
- What areas they like / dislike
- Their placement goals

Beginning and during placement

- Give a learning styles questionnaire
- Plan a flexible, structured and varied time-table
- Provide an orientation to the clinical site and an introduction to staff members
- Use the student’s learning objectives form taking into account their level of training
- Address any concerns the new student has and give time for questions

Learning objectives form

- Allows clarification of what the student expects to see/do/learn during their placement
- Guides the student towards setting SMART goals

SMART Goals

- E.g. for 3rd year student might be:
  - To be able to complete a subjective assessment on a musculoskeletal patient in the OPD setting within 20 minutes by week 3 of placement
  - S: subjective assessment of musculoskeletal patient
  - M: 20 minutes
  - A: due to access to this patient group and guidance throughout placement
  - R: True to standard practice
  - T: Week 3 of placement

Learning objectives form

- When completed with the practice educator, creates an awareness of each other’s intentions for the learning experience and ensures that both the student and the clinical educator are working towards the same goals
- Reduces conflict and confusion during the placement

Learning objectives form

- Regular review of the learning objectives throughout the placement and ensures that the student remains focused in achieving their goals
- The learning objectives form can take time to negotiate and discuss
How to maintain the positive learning environment

• Use different learning methods
• Regular constructive feedback
• Active involvement of students
• Observation of students with patients
• Completion and reference to middle and end sections of the clinical placement assessment form
• Support from practice tutor / college
• Case presentations by students

Different learning methods

• Audiovisual aids (DVD’s, CD’s)
• Demonstrations (equipment, practical techniques)
• Group activities/peer learning/discussions
• In-services
• Case-studies/ case presentations
• Shadowing/ observation of students with patients
• Workshops
• Guest speakers

Case Presentations

• Students present to other students and physiotherapists in the department

• Improves skills in speaking and presenting and helps students to reflect on their placement

Regular constructive feedback

• To provide positive feedback
  – Give verbal praise either in front of other participants or in private
  – Use positive responses during questioning
  – Let the student know how they are progressing towards achieving their goals
  – If giving constructive criticism, give specific examples on the day (not weeks later)
  – Focus on solutions

Clinical placement appraisal form

• Be familiar with the content and grading system so that throughout placement you are assessing and guiding the student towards achieving those competencies
• Become familiar with models for giving negative feedback in a positive way
• Always refer back to the learning objectives form to motivate students towards achieving their goals

Post placement management

• Preparation of the student for the clinical placement
• Preparation of the practice educator for the placement
• Content of the placement
• Level of supervision delivered
• Were local health and safely protocols adhered to?
Post-placement management

- Once the student’s learning experience is completed it is useful to evaluate the placement from both the student and the mentor perspective
- Evaluation also undertaken by the universities
- Can use a specifically designed feedback form for both the student and the mentor or can use the comments at the front of the clinical appraisal form

By reflecting back on what you intended to happen during the placement and what actually happened, you can learn and develop in your role as a mentor

References

- Therapy Project Office (2008) HSE Guidelines for good practice in practice education / Practice Educator competencies