



LEARNING PROGRAMME MASTERCLASS WEB PAGES

<p>TITLE:</p> <p>“Stew, Soup or Smoothie?” : understanding integrated services and growing the workforce capacity for multi-professional working in Children’s Services.</p>	<p>MASTERCLASS</p> <p>Ref: R1</p>
<p>Lead Presenters:</p>  <p>Rob Hulme, <i>(Professor of Education Research, University of Chester)</i> Faculty of Education and Children’s Services University of Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester, CH1 4BJ T: 01244 511012 E: r.hulme@chester.ac.uk</p>  <p>Pete Grady, <i>(NW Cluster Manager, Council for Workforce Development,. previously, Senior Lecturer in Social Work, Liverpool John Moore’s University.)</i></p>	<p>Session(s):</p>
<p>Chair : to be confirmed</p> <p>Rob Hulme</p>	<p>Room:</p>
<p>Supporting Practitioner(s):</p>	

Kate Black, University of Chester

KEY THEMES AND ISSUES:

“Stew, Soup or Smoothie?”

A key dimension of the *“Every Child Matters”* agenda is the drive for more closely integrated service planning, delivery and review. Achieving this in order to deliver better outcomes and more coherent and sustainable services remains a key challenge for Children’s Trusts and partner services. The nature of the challenge calls for different development approaches at different levels and stages. This Masterclass provides an opportunity to share experience as practitioners and researchers in meeting the challenge of developing leaders and front-line staff in multi-professional and trans-professional settings.

KEY QUESTIONS:

“Stew, Soup or Smoothie?”

1. What are the key challenges for leaders and front-line staff in integrated Children’s Services and how do successful practitioners respond?
2. What are the most appropriate development opportunities for staff and how might they be provided to accelerate the embedding of collaborative and integrated practice across Children’s Services?

PRACTICE EXAMPLES:

“Stew, Soup or Smoothie?”

1. Multi-professional Foundation Programme - LJMU
2. PG MPLeadership University of Chester
3. Multi-professional Team Building (NCCSL)

THINK PIECE – exploratory paper for discussion at the conference:

“Stew, Soup or Smoothie?”

Context

Building Capacities Through Practitioner Inquiry in Third Spaces

Voices from the field: the sticking points involved in developing shared understandings

a. Identities:

b. Running against the grain of policy regimes in different areas

c. Reflection on the Practice of others through Practitioner Enquiry

Developing Capacity at all levels

Issues for Reflection and Discussion Raised by our Work:

'Soup Stew or Smoothie'? Growing local capacity for multi-professional working for Children, Young People and Families

Context

The most significant challenge presented by Every Child Matters (ECM) is its requirement for inter-agency and multi-professional working. The integration of services for young people in education, social work, health and the criminal justice system, with its attendant requirement for closer and more systematic inter-agency working and the development of a more holistic 'trans-professional' knowledge base, offers challenges for those seeking to develop capacity at local authority level and to understand the nature of professional learning across boundaries. Relating policy to practice in this area is problematic at each level - local, national and trans-national/global. The reform agenda encourages and to some extent requires the integration of education, social work, health, and other service provision, with associated development of multi-professional and trans-professional collaboration.

Locally both the University of Chester and Liverpool John Moores University have responded to this changing agenda through engagement with the Learn Together Partnership (a consortium of local authorities and their partner agencies in and around Merseyside). Both institutions have developed programmes that are relevant to the needs of the local workforce, offering participants the opportunity to learn in new and exciting ways.

Based on a study at the University of Chester with the Learn Together Partnership into the

experience of practitioners working in multi-professional settings connected to ECM suggests that in assessing the challenges presented by collaborative, integrated or extended service provision, we should attempt to: (a) assess the extent to which the professional knowledge of practitioners involved in the delivery of integrated children's services has influenced the objectives and manifestations of local policy; (b) to what extent their differing understandings of the issues involved in multi-professional working have been mediated through competing cultures, structures and policy directions in each local context; and (c) how this might contribute to more informed and effective workforce development.

In both programmes we have found that collaborative multi-professional practitioner inquiry offers a way forward in the development of the shared language and common understandings from which a 'trans-professional knowledge base' might grow. In particular, when practitioner inquiry is open and critical it can be very effective in stimulating inter-professional dialogue since it opens up spaces and offers opportunities for professionals to theorise their own action and to relate this to the practice of others. Our conclusions reinforce those of McLaughlin et al (2006) that practitioner research is instrumental in moving beyond established 'communities of practice and towards the development of 'professional learning communities'.

Building Capacities Through Practitioner Inquiry in Third Spaces

We found Third Space theory and hybridity theory (Bhabha 1994, Taylor 1995, Aoki 1996) to be useful in setting the context for our work. The underpinning concepts in this work, clearly resonated with our central purpose of exploring the development of common language and shared understandings. We explored these ideas through Action Learning Sets and small scale practice –based inquiry as "*third spaces*" that play a significant role in the process of reflection and change. We came to see these structured experiences as 'sites' where practitioners could think and develop, individually and collectively, and where the process of change could be nurtured, drawing on but not constrained or dominated by the influence of current practice or the requirements of policy to initiate 'solutions' or solve 'problems'

Voices from the field: the sticking points involved in developing shared understandings

a. Identities:

"You might feel safe when you go back to your own office but where does that safe zone go when you start sitting in a room together?" (Focus group participant)

"I think we all have a real struggle to achieve (integrated working) if hand on heart, I think if we were all asked to honestly say do you really see that child as a child or are you still thinking as a leader as a manager that that child is a client, patient or pupil." (Focus group participant)

"I think there is also a fear around some professional boundaries that they may be diluted if

they share their skills with those of a lesser professional status.” (Focus group participant)

“For me, some of it is to do with deep seated value systems that there are in service areas and one of the barriers is having a unified value system that is based centrally on the service user.” (Focus Group participant)

b. Running against the grain of policy regimes in different areas

“You have professionals in that their integrity and reputation as part of their job as a professional is to get the best academically out of the child, their professionalism is the most important thing to that individual and that’s clearly a barrier to stopping everyone getting together and seeing things from the same light.” (Focus Group participant)

“At the end of the day we have got to deliver results and we don’t do that by talking to other professionals.” (High school teacher workshop participant)

“One of the problems we have is that we have a lot of agencies in an area that are all falling over each other and everybody has to own whatever they do, they all have steering groups etc, so if you try to do something integrated then it is always owned by somebody and that then immediately excludes somebody else.” (Focus group participant).

c. Reflection on the Practice of others through Practitioner Enquiry

Engagement with research opened up new spaces for inter-professional ‘conversations’.

“I think what it has helped me to do, it has given me somewhere to hang the confusion and the chaos at times so being part of the process but having somewhere to go to say that’s ok, that’s allowed, you should be feeling like that in the job that we are all trying to do, and I think that has been helping, but yeah the thinking and some more of the theoretical knowledge to underpin that.” (Focus group participant)

“I think in terms of leadership, I think what people are looking at in the chaos of the multi-agency bit is someone to give it some direction so if you can bring some clarity, that is leadership in itself, it’s just replenishing what you know and bringing it into that context.” (Focus group participant.)

Developing Capacity at all levels

The main focus of this study has been the part-time Masters programme of multi-professional leadership development at the University of Chester. This has been particularly useful for staff from middle and senior management with new responsibilities for multi-professional team leadership though other staff have had less formal responsibilities. Our

partner in the wider Learn Together Partnership programmes is Liverpool John Moores University and they have been working on a parallel programme for front-line staff in multi-professional settings. In the initial pilot of this 18 week programme, there was a strong focus on Child Development, accepting that this presented a commonality of concept for the workforce on which to base an exploration of key ideas and through which to conduct conversations about the developing integration agenda for teams and individuals. Beginning with a range of experiences that suggested that having a shared understanding of fundamental knowledge and systems would provide a strong basis for collaborative and integrated approaches, the programme has been balanced with an emphasis on reflection on team building and integrative processes. It is interesting to see some similar practitioner issues arising in both programmes. An evaluation of the programmes is being undertaken by Edge Hill University and a report is expected in 2009.

Issues for Reflection and Discussion Raised by our Work:

The challenges involved in the promotion of integrated service delivery are very considerable. In many ways the 'Every Child Matters' runs counter to the dominant trajectories of policy for the separate services across the public sector, where there is still a very strong focus on 'performativity' based on 'evidence' and selected practice within professional environments. However, our evidence suggests that it is possible to develop more person centred, integrated approaches if appropriate environments are created for professionals to come together to engage in critical reflection, under conditions that enable or encourage risk-taking in relatively safe or protected spaces.

- 1. Our more positive findings on the impact of practitioner enquiry may simply reflect the 'legitimation' of action research and collaborative work as a means of fulfilling the policy requirements for interagency working. It may be that there is only limited scope in the system for genuine critical reflection about values and principles – some may see action research and practitioner enquiry as just the tool of centrally determined policy.*
- 2. Developing trans-professional capacity through engaging with practitioners from different professional and organisational backgrounds in "third spaces" or contexts that are conducive to practice-focused learning offers promising and fertile ground for development. There are likely to be other conditions or activities that are effective and it will be important to work out the appropriate mix for particular personal and organisational circumstances. It is not clear that the needs analysis, commissioning and delivery systems are yet in place for this to work well.*
- 3. This process of building genuine inter-professional understanding involves, for many, some uncomfortable compromises and the 'surrendering' of aspects of identity. Changes will not happen if we simply ask professionals to 'work it through'. We need to know more about the conditions under which these changes may take place and the many national initiatives in this area of workforce development need positive coordination without unduly restrictive constraints.*

4. *The notion of a 'larger professionalism' runs counter to the dominant trajectories of 'evidence-informed' policy in education and social welfare which effectively narrow spaces for professional creativity. The development of new approaches to integrated working across Children's Services offers excellent opportunities for strengthening professional empowerment or agency and widening scope for staff to "make a difference" – hence improving morale. Will we take these opportunities?*

5. *For practitioners to open up the conversations and dialogues through engagement with action research which our participants found most rewarding, they must be provided with the spaces to define their own questions about their practice and that of others. How far is this process sustainable in the day to day realities of working in multi-professional settings?*

6. *What are the most effective forms of training and professional development to support the development of trans-professional capacity building in safe but challenging spaces and how might they best be engaged with practitioners and practice?*

REFERENCES, RESOURCES AND READING

“Stew, Soup or Smoothie?”

Learning Across Boundaries: developing trans-professional understanding through practitioner inquiry.

Rob Hulme and David Cracknell

[R1 RH DC]

Integration and vulnerable children and families

Grady, P (2003) Strong Foundations – How Effective can the Integrated Children's System be when Working with Vulnerable Children and their Families? Practice vol.15 (2) 15-28

[R1 Strong Foundations]

DELEGATE COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

“Stew, Soup or Smoothie?”

If you would like to leave feedback relating to this Masterclass please go to:
<http://www.nec2009.co.uk/guestbookform.asp>.

LEARNING FORMAT FOR MASTERCLASS

“Stew, Soup or Smoothie?”

With the permission and collaboration of the delegates choosing this Masterclass, the form suggested is that of a FOCUS GROUP structured to produced evidence for further research. It will follow ethical research guidelines and participants will be asked to sign consent forms.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT FOR NEEC 09