



Designing a Professional Development Program: An Action Research Project

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Abstract

The aim of professional development is to provide active learning opportunities to promote and reinforce lifelong learning. For education programs to flourish they need to be accessible, relevant and worthwhile. Australia comprises of many regional and rural health care districts and health care professionals who work in regional areas have limited access to relevant and worthwhile professional development. Generally, health professionals are required to travel long distances, encounter accommodation costs and absenteeism from the workplace for days.

Five years ago, an Action Research project was undertaken for the purpose of developing, implementing and evaluating a multi-discipline and collaborative Professional Development program. The strength of action research is that it brings many people together and the work of researching, reflecting, and introducing changes is shared. Following six months of focus groups a Professional Development program was designed and structured to meet the unique and changing educational needs of health professionals from a region with deficient educational opportunities. This education program was designed for health care professionals from every discipline and focused on three key areas: Workplace Management, Practice Issues and Research Skills.

Through the process of action research, an innovative education program for health care professionals, from a range of disciplines, was developed. Emerging findings will be presented so that the audience can benefit from this experience which also outlines the importance of a community having to prioritise workplace demands with ongoing education. The provision of professional development opportunities for health care employees in a specific regional area shifted from being limited and unavailable to being significant and accessible due to being innovative and inclusive.

Keywords: Professional Development, Health care professionals, Innovation and Action Research.

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