

Influence of culture on Revalidation, Performance and Remedial Work

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Understanding Concept of Culture

Definition

“Culture consists of a body of learned beliefs, traditions, and guides for behaving and interpreting behaviour that are shared among members of a particular group. It includes values, beliefs, customs, communication style, behaviours, practices and institutions” (*Blue J 2003*). Cultural studies show that “culture education” starts as a child and further reinforced in the school. Being part of a culture that honours these values, teachers and peers inculcate additional values that consolidate the learning and assimilation at home. The process of progression through education and work further refines cultural learning and leads to development of smaller cultures (layers of culture) within a general triangle of the individual, family and nation some like religious culture, Gender, Generation, or professional /organisational /regional cultures etc.

Values and dimensions of culture

Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others. They become natural to us and are not always conscious. They can be inferred by the way people react to different circumstances. Key dimensions of cultural values can be understood on the basis of response of members of culture to elements as follows

1. Individual member’s interpretation of relationship with others, in particular, those in a position of authority.
2. Assignment of tasks to gender and interpretation of success in completion of tasks
3. Relationship with knowledge and exploration of knowledge

Culture and Medical Education

Culture of medical education has, overtime, evolved leading to contemporary model of medical education. The teachers in the contemporary model of medical education are viewed as purveyors and recipients of knowledge, they seek active participation from learners and they rigorously manage professional boundaries.

It is possible to argue that evolution of medical education has been in response to dynamic changes in the culture and to some extent influenced by the prevailing social culture of the organisations that are leading this evolution.

Potential Implication of Culture

Common Preferences for Educational Relationship

Teachers enjoy students who balance respect with challenge, questioning and debate. They seek student participation and responsibility. There is common expectation that learners and teachers will manage professional boundaries, there will be active engagement in the process of learning. Lastly learners will be able to work in teams and demonstrate evidence of learning from 'mistakes'.

Potential Implication of Culture - Overseas Medical Trainees

Traditional models of Medical Education may, however, encourage competitive learning and perception of educational supervisors as 'wise parents' who would act as good parents. The learners tend towards subservience. They may avoid debate and challenge leading to hearing feedback defensively. They have difficulty in undertaking self-directed learning preferring to seek direction from others.

Practical steps dealing with culture

Genuine non-judgemental interest (Kleinman), Examine your own cultural attitudes and knowledge, Use culturally sensitive interviewing tools, Foster an open, sensitive approach to patient and respect health beliefs. Be open and ask – mostly members of other cultures feel happy to talk about their culture.

Explore learners' or patients' beliefs and make them aware that this interest is based on the knowledge that eliciting this information is important for planning an effective planning for education and treatment regimens.

An important step is to examine your own comfort interacting with individuals from cultural backgrounds different from your own and to assess your own cultural beliefs, assumptions, preferences and biases.

Key Messages

Discussions about culture can help highlight issues of long-term effects of a disadvantaged social position, differences in access to information, services, resources and health and educational system. There can be feeling of lack of control over one's own life circumstances that may reinforce social and economic inequalities.

Cultural factors affect people's ability to withstand the stressors – biological, social, psychological and economic – that can trigger ill health and poor integration in the host culture/organisation. They also affect the capacity to change behaviour.