

On-the-job learning: the intern perspective



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What this presentation will cover

- Rationale
- Scope of the project
- Theoretical framework
- Concepts of the intern role
- Experiences of on-the-job learning
- Conclusions

Why do the study?

- **PhD = research project**
- **I wanted to explore the links between student learning, work place learning and the learning organisation**
- **paucity of research in prevocational education**

Scope of the study

- Longitudinal qualitative study
- Three interviews over the course of intern year with 30 volunteer interns
- Interviews with supervisors, managers and advisers
- Examination of job descriptions, learning objectives and working conditions

Theoretical foundation

Experiential learning involves ~

- Willing participation
- Reflection on the process
- Conceptualising the experience
- Decision making and problem solving

David Kolb

Theoretical Framework

Constructivist theory of learning

- Dewey; thinking as engagement in action
- Schön; problem solving as a conversation with a situation
- Wenger; learning in a community of practice

First interview



**How did they
conceptualise
the intern role as
they prepared to
start their
internship?**

Pre-interns conceptualisation of the intern role?

- Task focused and dependent
- Patient care and team membership
- Coordinator of patient care and patient advocate

Intern 1

“You’re at the bottom of the ladder. The Reg and the Consultant tell you what to do. The job is mostly administrative, writing discharge summaries, writing out medications, writing up”

Intern 2

“Interns are part of a working team. It’s our job to really listen to what the consultants and the registrars say, take care of basic patient management. You have some responsibility but you’re part of something larger”

Intern 3

“It’s a sort of liaison officer for my patient, and advocate for my patient to ensure they have the best care, knowledge and understanding of what’s going on.”

Description of the experience of on-the-job learning?

- Patient centered
- Asking questions as you go
- Problem solving
- Familiarity
- Collaborating with seniors and others
- Being responsible

Intern 4

“You focus on what the patient presents with, so the patient dictates your learning topics rather than you or your lecturer dictating them.”

Intern 5

“... it’s becoming a lot more practical. It’s a process of thinking and evaluating and probably re-ordering things in your brain while you are working.”

Intern 6

“I learn because I assess the patient, think about a management plan, talk to my supervisor. I find out for myself, I discuss with my seniors to verify my results or decisions and then I have it sorted. That is learning on the job. The most important part is the discussion.”

Conclusions

- **Centrality of patient assessment and care**
- **Importance of the attitude of the supervisor**
- **Importance of collaboration in the decision making process**

Intern 7

“... reason everything went well was having a good registrar who knew how a new intern would be feeling, who kept telling me ‘you are still very new, you are learning, you are doing very well’.”

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