

Abstract

This empirical case study explores what constitutes patient safety knowledge in the therapeutic radiography (TR) curriculum and how undergraduate students transfer this type of knowledge from the classroom to the workplace. Drawing on Guile and Evans' theory of recontextualisation (2010), the theoretical framework examines how the curriculum content and pedagogic practices from an undergraduate TR programme, based in a UK higher education institution, transfer to a placement programme based in a Foundation Trust Hospital where the students undertake workplace experience.

The methodology used a qualitative, interpretive paradigm. Data collection between January and April 2015 involved documentary analysis of course documents and semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students, workplace educators and faculty staff. Observation involving level five students was undertaken in the workplace.

Research findings showed that knowledge was recontextualised in the operation of the radiotherapy equipment, in the implementation of infection control measures and in the identification of patients. Additionally, content recontextualisation of professional and regulatory guidance showed that the safe use of ionising radiation constituted the core knowledge of radiography practitioners. Conclusions were that patient safety was multidimensional in practice thus defying the attempt to contain this concept as a discrete entity.

This research forms the first study in the field of TR showing a socio-cultural understanding of how professional statements are recontextualised in the practice of patient safety. Curriculum statements regarding skills development and proficiency constitute an informal, self-directed workplace curriculum that is driven by students' motivation to become competent practitioners. This study contributes to the literature on patient safety in the undergraduate healthcare curriculum and highlights the omission of the systems approach in the TR curriculum. In the application of the theoretical framework of recontextualisation, recasting of practice knowledge from the workplace into the formal TR undergraduate curriculum is shown thus demonstrating the explanatory power of this conceptual lens in this radiography discipline.

Keywords: patient safety, healthcare, recontextualisation, therapeutic radiography, knowledge transfer, undergraduate education, workplace learning