Belonging as a pedagogical tool for a sustainable primary care workforce

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Background

The primary care environment is facing rapid evolution due to demographic changes, workforce shortages and technological transformation. Learners often experience disengagement and uncertainty regarding their professional identity during clinical placements. While belonging is crucial for a viable workforce, it is often viewed as an abstract feeling. This work transitions it into a deliberate and visible pedagogical commitment.

How do we move belonging into an actionable curriculum with professional development design to create a sustainable primary care workforce?

Materials and methods

A workshop of 50-60 stakeholders from various primary care disciplines. The session established common ground using theoretical frameworks to explore the meaning of belonging. Activities:

- Co-creation: small-group development of a belonging vision board to highlight phrases and strategies to represent ideal belonging experiences
- Scenario- based learning using real-life cases to identify changes for learner integration.
- Open dialogue regarding systemic gaps, challenges and impact.

Acknowledgments

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Results

Thematic analysis of data showed a powerful sense of belonging which creates an architecture for building a sustainable workforce.

Key findings highlighted -

- The direct positive influence of belonging on the well-being of learners.
- Concrete strategies to meet diverse learner needs.
- The necessity of workplace policies that embrace cultural diversity and promote an inclusive workforce.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent sought for dissemination of the workshop output. There has been careful representation of participants' contributions as a collective process and avoidance of identifiable descriptions or quotes.



References

- Allen, K.-A. et al. (2021) Belonging: a review of conceptual issues, an integrative framework, and directions for future research. Australian journal of psychology. [Online] 73 (1), 87–102.
- Saberzadeh-Ardestani, B. et al. (2025) Measuring Sense of Belonging Among Current and Future Physicians: A Systematic Review. Academic Medicine. [Online] 100 (11), e68–e79.

Conclusions

Discussion highlighted the long-term systemic benefits of creating an environment of belonging, despite the rapid flux in the primary healthcare landscape.

Belonging is a significant pedagogical concept that mitigates feelings of isolation promoting professional identity development and growth.

This work adds to the body of evidence on the workplace as an educational environment. Further exploration will take place through future workshops in the Kent & Medway Educators' Conference.



Further information

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