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A kaleidoscope of enquiry - showcasing examples of collaborative practice to promote inclusive learning environments

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The symposia will showcase three research studies from the UK and Ireland that involve occupational therapists (OT), physiotherapists (PT) and educators who have conducted research and used innovative approaches to develop inclusive and collaborative learning environments. All three of the studies introduced student-centred resources or programmes using a consultative collaborative process. Findings demonstrated that there were benefits not only to children and young people, but to parental and professional knowledge and understanding.

Paper 1

This paper explores findings from a small scale research study which set out to examine the impact of a practice-based professional development lunch time resource designed for use by educators as a whole school approach to supporting the development of children's movement and coordination.

The resource aimed to help education professionals to understand the link between children's motor coordination development and learning. Using a case study approach qualitative data was collected from the schools (75% of which were in a disadvantaged geographical location in the South East of England). Schools were supported throughout the data collection period by occupational therapists, an education specialist and health promotion specialists.

The findings from this small study suggest timely access to expert advice to verify changes in practice and content focused on learning and attainment are essential. Strategies and interventions suggested also have to relate explicitly to everyday classroom issues. The lunch time resource appears to be of particular relevance for children in per - school and primary settings when the development of postural control affecting a child's sitting ability, together with the emergence of the mastery of a range of manipulative skills is crucial to academic progress.

Paper 2

Post primary schools serving populations of social disadvantage report greater numbers of students with significant challenging behaviours being excluded and dropping out from school. The National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) was set up by the Department of Education and Science in 2006 to promote and support positive behaviour for learning through the provision of a systematic continuum of support to school communities. In 2009 a partnership was established with the Discipline of Occupational Therapy, Trinity College Dublin to explore a contribution in an evidenced based manner.

This paper will describe the consultative collaborative process, and the practice model between the NBSS and the Discipline of Occupational Therapy in developing and delivering programmes to support inclusion of students with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties (SEBD).

Abstract continuation

Through collaboration student centred interventions within an enhanced physical and social environment of school are delivered. An expanded understanding of sensory processing issues as part of challenging behaviours in the context of school was shared.

The work is informed by the Person-Environment-Occupation Model (Law, Cooper, Strong, Stewart, Rigby and Letts, 1996).

Teacher and student perspectives on some of these programmes will be shared, including the evidence on the relevance and perceived value of an adapted version of the Alert Program (Williams and Shellenberger, 1995).

Paper 3 evaluates the effectiveness of a training package developed to improve educators and parent's confidence in providing postural care to children with disabilities at school and in the home. Occupational therapists and physiotherapists worked together across 10 locations in 3 counties in providing training to seventy - five parents and educators.

Occupational performance and participation in school activities for disabled children in school is affected by impairment in postural control. Parents and educators experience difficulties in providing care for a child's postural needs focused on functional positioning and comfort because adaptive devices and concepts are complex. Therefore this paper discusses the findings from the training package and concludes with key messages for practice and care.

Papers

- 1: Findings from the introduction of universal resources designed to support the motor and functional skills of pupils in a small sample of mainstream primary schools in England
- 2: Inter-Professional Collaboration: Supporting better participation and inclusion for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) in post - primary school
- 3: The effectiveness of a postural care training package in supporting parents and educators optimize function and promote the well - being and participation of children with disabilities.