

The Contribution Of Interdisciplinary Cooperation In Helping Professions

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Abstract

The article attempts to highlight the components of the importance of interdisciplinary cooperation and factors in the field of helping professions - such as social work or special pedagogy. Questions are raised: What structural components and elements of interdisciplinary cooperation are important for helping professions? Meanwhile, everyone usual work is important to not forget about professional development, being responsible for our work and taking part in multidisciplinary and multi-organizational project and systems. For most workers this is usual, and they do not even realize it, it is automatic. The reality is unfortunately different, and the idea of multidisciplinary cooperation is in helping professions underrated and in real interaction it is not met. The aim of this paper is to not just describe but also highlight the importance of a multidisciplinary tool. Plus raise awareness of its importance during work. A professional is a person who knows a lot but is able to communicate and cooperate also.

Introduction

The terms multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, together with other terms such as multiorganizational and inter-organizational identifies Kaňak (2018) as very similar, almost the same. Whether one defines the terms the same as others or differently, all professional involved in the decision process must communicate with a similar goal, which is the best possible for a client. According to Nancarrow et. al (2013), it is important to diverse terms inter/multi-professional which are terms used for the cooperation of professionals from diverse fields, and terms inter/multidisciplinary which are terms used for the cooperation of professionals with non-professionals.

An important role for clients plays the support which is the result of professionals' cooperation. The professionals can share their knowledge, competencies, abilities, and skills. So, they can offer very complex help which a client demands and needs. The concept of multidisciplinary was introduced between 1970-1980 by professionals who worked in social services dedicated to people with mental health disabilities and by professionals who worked in services for people with diabetes (they have cooperated). The growing interest in this approach led to the creation of many definitions focused on cooperation with interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approach (Madge & Khair, 2000).

Ovretveit (1997) describes a multidisciplinary approach as "... two or more people from diverse fields communicate and cooperate towards common goal" (Ovretveit, 1997, p.12). The common goal is in this case positive result for a client, The professionals' cooperation should begin at the begging of planning the goal, organizing the path towards the goal. All of this helps with better communication and organization of the help. The significant role in multidisciplinary cooperation have working teams. Ovretveit (1997) categorize the working teams:

- client's teams – the professionals take care of the individual client, but they communicate and discuss the client's situation;
- changing teams – each professional helps individually and sends a client to another professional.

Currently, there are no similar definitions of multidisciplinary approach available. Neither in Czech literature or foreign literature.

Multidisciplinary team

Kuznikova (2013) defines the multidisciplinary team as a team of professionals when everyone has an unsubstituted role, but together they are not able to reach an agreement, because each of them has individual goals with a client.

The term multidisciplinary approach can define a team of people, where everyone has a different field of focus and different goals. Even though the member of the multidisciplinary team can meet, discuss and communicate their goals are different and independent of each other. Thus, there is a higher possibility of conflicts

(Robertson, 2020). On the other hand, Swientozielskyj et. al (2015) see a multidisciplinary approach as the connection of diverse fields, in this case, the author talks about providers of health's, schools', and social services. Due to cooperation, sharing the information, searching for some perspective and gaining from diverse disciplines the professionals are trying to reach the complex care for a client. The cooperation of all professionals allows the care to be complex and connected throughout all fields. The individual parts of care across diverse disciplines are not cancelling each other but allows the understanding of individuals' needs, whether the needs are in the field of health, school, or social. The common goal for all professionals allows the process of sharing important information about an individual. Therefore, in future, the needs can be meet and a client can feel comfortable.

The multidisciplinary approach can be seen in real-time in one of the significant projects of transformation in psychiatric care in the Czech Republic. It is the cooperation of professionals from diverse social services and institutions who aims to offer help and support in all fields of one's life such as health care, social services, education, housing etc. It is important that all professional from different field cooperate involving the offices and department of social structure. The professionals due to sharing information and cooperation try to help a client and their family (Mental Health Reform, 2017).

Another no less important aspect is the legal level "... modern trends in the history of democratic and rule of law represent requirements for the active participation of citizens in creating an environment of legal stability and legal certainty, especially in relation to the protection of human rights and freedoms. Very complicated systems of legal rules are being created to guarantee the full and undisturbed exercise of human rights and freedoms and, on the other hand, the fulfillment of legal obligations" (Víšek, Kroupa, 2020, p. 174).

In term of starting multidisciplinary team is important to take several steps. The first step is assigning the purpose of the team. Further is important to write a protocol, a document where is described the purpose of the team. There should be present the common values, believes, and rules which are respected by every member. Therefore, meeting the goals should in accordance with this protocol. Finally, the last step is the decision about who and when is contributing to the cooperation. While starting the team is crucial to establish an environment for health and strong relationships in the teams. The basis for establishing and maintaining good relationships are clearly defined and limited roles and competencies of each team member. The professions diverse by their values, working methods, and statutes. The professions work with diverse knowledge and information, they use various conceptual frames and discourse, which can lead to conflict inside of the team. "The team members must be able to understand and explain their formal responsibility, they have to be responsible towards their team and defines with other team members their field of work in the team" (Nicholson et al., 2000, p. 43).

Hanusova&Hellebrandova (2006) based on their experiences have described ten steps for functioning interdisciplinary cooperation:

- Creating a functioning team with competent professionals, where the respect and contribution of each member are considered.
- With help of rules, the functioning of a team can be ensured, the best is a written agreement. Kuznikova (2011) highlights that the agreement should be understandable and proved by all members. It should contain realistic goals, tools and options, how these goals can be met.
- To ensure effective communication which allows presentation of own opinions and attitudes, and simultaneously all members should be aware of others' opinions and attitudes.
- Mutual respect of defined competitions and options of other members' multidisciplinary team.
- To gain knowledge about offered services, institutions, organizations, and other providers not only in the region.
- To ensure partners' approach in the team, based on mutual respect and trust.
- To educate the team members or to offer them further development of their education. To allow reciprocal education between members.
- To create methodologies, manuals, and strategies.
- Proper offer of help to a client, which will be due to steps 1-9 effective and with a clear goal.

The related fields for special pedagogy, where the multidisciplinary approach is applied, are pedagogy, sociology, or social work. Another field which closely related to special pedagogy is psychology and its subcategories such as developmental psychology, cognitive psychology. Into multidisciplinary cooperation include the relation between special pedagogy and medicine – for example paediatrics, neurology. Renotierova (2005, p.24) states "findings another scientific field which has the normative character of helping science. These fields help in orientation which a disabled individual could have, what they can be like. This can be discovered by searching for the optimal methods, approaches, attitudes, and norms. However, mainly it should be logic, ethic, law, and aesthetic.

As with any other cooperation the multidisciplinary approach has positives which can be seen by members of teams, but by a client as well. On the other hand, there are some negatives, risks, or barriers which can occur while using the multidisciplinary approach.

The positives for multidisciplinary approach organized by author Hrda (2018), Swientozielskyj et al. (2015):

- Improvement in quality of care after one.
- Effective and productive work of the team.
- Gaining a bigger overview of the problem.
- Vocational enriching of professionals.
- Cooperation while searching for a solution, new ideas.
- Faster and more effective help for a client.
- The feeling of certainty for the client's family.
- Sharing and transferring important information.

Possible barriers while using the multidisciplinary approach:

- Lack of time for building the trust between professionals and a client.
- Nonuniform use of terminology (medicine – patient, education – pupil, social services – client).
- Underrating and non-respecting of vocational fields of other professionals.
- Time heftiness and agreeing on meetings with every member of the multidisciplinary team.
- The non-legislative definition of multidisciplinary teams.
- Problems with sharing sensitive materials about a client.

Discussion

The respect and positive attitude towards other workers from different organizations is the basic component for effective cooperating relation. For establishing team cooperation is crucial that other members accept individual differences, learn to understand, respect others, and build personal relationships with other members of the teams. Every member is important and can bring something unique to the team.

The multidisciplinary practice is unique even in the challenges which are involved. The cooperation of people from various fields brings differences for example in values, language, the ways of dealing with problems, strategies, and diverse elements of professional behaviour. The barriers to effective cooperation are mainly in the field of trust, responsibility, communication, and fight for power (Stárek, 2015).

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