Reviewer’s report

Title: Students with specific learning disabilities experiences of pre-registration physiotherapy education: A qualitative study

Version: 0 Date: 09 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Trish Hafford-Letchfield

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for inviting me to review your manuscript. This is an important area given the increasing stressful environment of the NHS which can disproportionately impact on Disabled students it is and useful to consider your professional experiences within this context.

I thought that the content was interesting and highlights some of the potential for utilising professional skills and knowledge such as in physiotherapy to support students more holistically. I have provided the following comments which I hope will help to improve your manuscript further:

1. I suggest that the discussion about disability, its categories and terminology, i.e 'hidden', 'adjustments' etc are framed or referenced using the Equality legislative framework. There could be a lot more context setting in relation to the challenges of both education and practice environments in the NHS which make it more difficult for students to 'come out'. This coming out or the notion of it, in respect of 'invisibility' could also be better explained throughout the paper and the factors that may contribute to student disclosure, or our responses to disclosure. You may find Ryan et al (2016) report on NHS Disabled Workforce useful here. https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/edc3-july-2015.pdf also via http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/18741/ . Currently I find the use of terminology such as 'hidden', 'disabled students', 'students with disabilities' inconsistent throughout the paper and a bit confusing and the debate about terminology, disability rights could be better framed and referenced. There is a lot of political debate which is not acknowledged (see also Campbell-Kumari's work on 'Abelism').

2. If possible from your sample, it might be fruitful to acknowledge how disabilities intersects with other protected characteristics of students.

3. The approach to recruitment and sampling needs more detail beyond it being a convenience sample. For example you talk about 'unseen' disabilities, so how was this used to engage your target population. You also talk about students in the target group having a 'diagnosed condition' which again needs to be framed in how disability is defined in legislation as it may not always be diagnosed (which your study revealed in respect of one of its student participants)
4. The reference to one of the researchers being disabled could be clarified further in terms of any relevance or not to insider research, influence on sample and any comments on how this impacted the research. For example, was this a deliberate strategy in the move towards more co-produced research design?

5. Could you provide more detail on how you reached your themes, with reference to the methodology literature. What was involved in the inductive process - how was the data coded for example.

6. A few summative points at the end of each theme will improve the flow of the manuscripts.

7. Most of the findings relate to academic learning environment and it would be helpful to hear more about the transition between this and practice, particularly given the findings about the role of practice educators utilising their skills to help students with recognising challenges and supporting them. What are the implications here for the profession and its contribution to education and modelling good practice in the NHS.

Overall, a very interesting paper that could be strengthened with a sharper focus on the context and process of learning through the students experience and to draw out the implications for education in both academic and practice.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript
Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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