

Book review

Miller C., Freeman M. and Ross N. 2001: *Interprofessional practice in health and social care: challenging the shared learning agenda*. London: Arnold 248pp £18.99. ISBN: 0 340 76256 X.

This is a useful book to those both familiar and new to the concept of shared learning and with an interest in promoting interprofessional practice. Those who have immersed themselves in the subject for several years should find this a comprehensive overview providing an 'aide memoir' of the myriad issues that make up the subject matter. For the newer reader, it will provide a structure for understanding some of the complexities of what is shared and/or interprofessional learning. It provides a wealth of insights and provokes the sort of reflection needed for personal understanding. The complexity of the subject is seen in the range of perspectives that are held and the many different and yet inter-related disciplines that make up the huge topic of interprofessional education and practice. It is not of course a definitive text on the subject, and nor could it be or should it be. The book demonstrates the complexity and diversity of the topic that is held together by a common intuitive logic.

Two fundamental questions are examined that should be asked by anyone who is considering implementing interprofessional education for the healthcare professions: first, how well do the different health and social welfare professionals work together in the team that is caring for the patient? Secondly are they being adequately prepared by their education to work effectively in a team?

The authors describe a broad and inclusive perspective of all the stakeholders concerned with interprofessional education. This includes changes that have occurred within health and social care, organizational and professional, changes in educational practice, political climates and the shift to reflective thinking. Compelling reasons are given for why interprofessional education and practice is, and has been for some time, high on the health and social care agenda, if not as high on the higher education agenda.

It gives an honest and unbiased account of the working practices of health and social care teams and the reasons why teamworking succeeds and at the same time fails in many ways. The authors have recognized the importance of examining the notion of teamworking and in particular multiprofessional teamworking. From this the reader is given a varied account of the different perceptions and patterns of clinical teamworking and the wide variations and complexities seen in health and social care teams. These are brought to life by the inclusion of case histories and field-note observations and comments received that serve to make the experiences of teamworking very familiar to all of us.

Theoretical explanations are included to explain the many observations and experiences of teamworking recorded. Included in this is the importance of a model of what the authors call multiprofessional education. Such a model is suggested by the authors. Also included are recommendations for changes in educational and professional practice. These range from the broad and possibly idealistic to the more focused and pragmatic, expressed as learning outcomes for inclusion/revision of curricula.

A good resource for those new to the topic and the promotion of further thinking by those more familiar. Not a book to recommend to the cynic. Those that are opposed to education that brings about radical change to professional practices and the way organizations function, will believe it shows the confusion of competing interpretations, academic inertia and professional and organizational. However, agree with them or not, this book attempts to move the interprofessional agenda on by suggesting positive and practical actions needed to bring about such change.

Paul Wilby

*Acting Director of Learning and Teaching
University of Wales College of Medicine
Member of the Board of Directors of CAIPE
(UK Centre for the Advancement of
Interprofessional Education)*