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Experiences with Interprofessional Education in Winterthur
A field report about the implementation of interprofessional education

Marion Huber
Fachstelle Interprofessionelle Lehre und Praxis, Institut für Gesundheitswissenschaften
Zürcher Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften, Zurich, Switzerland
marion.huber@zhaw.ch

The Department of Health of the Zurich University of Applied Sciences was founded 13 years ago with Occupational Therapy, Nursing and Physiotherapy. One year later, the midwifery course was launched. The opportunity arose to define common educational contents. The contents were originally selected on the basis of seemingly suitable subject areas. There were common time slots in after-work hours. A common time block of 2 weeks was defined for one module. The main topics were ethics, scientific working and health economics.

As part of a first curriculum revision in 2012, agreement was reached on an interprofessional day per week over all semesters as a common time slot. In addition, further subject areas were assigned to interprofessional teaching. Overall, interprofessional teaching was increased to 27 CPs as part of the Bachelor’s programme. A second four-week practice-oriented IP block with five different elective subject areas was added in the fifth semester. The Winterschool is affiliated to this module. Students have to attend three of the five subjects, unless they have specific previous achievements in a particular course. The topics are Crisis & Coping, Consulting, Diversity, Interprofessional Cooperation and Professional Identity. Diversity and Professional Identity are offered in English so that international students from all over the world can also participate.

In 2015, the foundation of the Interprofessional Teaching and Practice Centre was added. This was due to the fact that for the interprofessional modules, teachers were specially employed within a team, this team was originally assigned to occupational therapy, but was mainly concerned with the development of interprofessional teaching. In addition, the center of interprofessional learning and practice was affiliated to a newly founded Institute for Health Sciences. The IP-team currently consists of 10 people.

In the current curriculum revision for 2020, a further 3 CPs were achieved. This was due to the fact that a common interpretation order of all issues revealed a clear thematic overlap between the profession-specific offers. Two main themes are currently being pursued in interprofessional teaching: Scientific working as one thematic thread and communication and interprofessional cooperation as the second thread. Both thematic threads are developed longitudinally throughout the entire course. Colleagues from all degree programmes are integrated into the module development, including those from the new health promotion and prevention programme, which was added in 2017. The aim is now to strengthen networking with the profession-specific study programmes and their teaching staff, as room for improvements were identified. In addition, compulsory elective courses on overlapping topics from at least two professions with a clear practical relevance are planned. A clear separation between multi-professional and interprofessional courses is being sought according to the motto: Where it says “interprofessional”, it must also include “interprofessional”.