

Mandatory attendance at practical classes - pedagogy or paternalism?

Karen Donald¹

Travis Haber², Deb Virtue¹, Jessica Lees¹, Jessica Stander¹, Samantha Byrne³, Elaina Kefalianos¹, Nicole Hill¹, Bronwyn Tarrant¹, Lisa Cheshire¹, Anthea Cochrane¹, Tamara Clements¹, Lauren Story¹ and Miki Maruyama¹

¹ The University of Melbourne

² Melbourne Dental School, The University of Melbourne

Abstract

Background

Health professional students frequently learn, practise, and demonstrate key professional and technical skills in practical class settings. As such, “attendance hurdles” are frequently applied to practical classes.

Summary of work

This study explores if attendance hurdles for practical classes are based on sound pedagogy and describes staff experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about attendance hurdle practices.

A scoping review of the literature was undertaken to establish the evidence for attendance at practical classes and its correlation to performance in Medicine, Dentistry, Health Sciences and Science courses, in tertiary education settings. Building on the findings of this scoping review, we surveyed a purposeful sample of 68 academic staff in Medicine, Dentistry, Optometry, Physiotherapy, Social work, Nursing, Speech Pathology, and Audiology to determine their experiences, attitudes and beliefs about attendance hurdles for practical classes.

Results

Demographic data of survey participants and rates and reasons for maintaining or abolishing attendance hurdles will be presented. We will describe staff beliefs about why attendance hurdles are needed, and how student attendance, skill acquisition and competency might be maintained in the absence of hurdle requirements.

Discussion

This study describes the experiences, attitudes and beliefs related to attendance hurdles for practical classes in health professional education and compares these results to the findings of the scoping review, potentially informing recommendations for the use of attendance hurdles for practical classes. Furthermore, we will discuss how these results address gaps in the literature and highlight future research.

Conclusions

The study will be of interest to health professional educators who teach subjects with practical classes. The scoping review and current study may inform assessment design, policy and organisational approaches to attendance hurdles for practical classes.

Implications for further research

Further research to explore students' experiences, attitudes and beliefs about attendance hurdles for practical classes should be sought.

References (maximum three)

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