An exploration of the academic viewpoint of integration, using a Bernsteinian perspective.

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Background: The integration of 'science' and 'practice' within a modular MPharm curriculum is an increasing emphasis within pharmacy education. Some of the main challenges associated with the integration of pharmaceutical science and pharmacy practice can be highlighted by applying Bernstein's vertical and horizontal knowledge discourse (Bernstein, 2000). This study aimed to explore the perspectives of both the science-based and practice-based pharmacy educator through the application of Bernstein's social realist approach to knowledge and vocational education.

Method: An exploration of pharmacy knowledge and its relationship to professional practice, using semi-structured, interviews with 12 academic members of staff from three different Schools of Pharmacy. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed using a reflexive, framework analysis.

Results: Respondents were invited to discuss their experiences of the integration of science and practice within the MPharm curriculum. Many of the themes from the analysis of the interview transcripts focused on the perceived practical barriers associated with integration such as:

- Modular organisation viewed as an obstacle to fuller integration of science and practice
- It is possible to over-integrate and the programme content becomes fragmented
- Some parts of the science curriculum are more difficult to integrate with practice than others
- Integration sometimes feels 'forced'

Discussion: Bernstein uses specific language to describe vertical (scientific) knowledge and horizontal (practice) knowledge. Some of the practical difficulties and "forcing" associated with integration can be defined more clearly by referring to Bernstein's description of knowledge relations. The interview narratives suggest that horizontal, segmented practice knowledge can be transferred into a vertical hierarchical scientific knowledge structure. By contrast, the integration of scientific, hierarchical knowledge into practice may be more difficult to achieve.

Reference

BERNSTEIN, B. B. 2000. *Pedagogy, symbolic control, and identity: Theory, research, critique*, Rowman & Littlefield Pub Inc.