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Press Release

HKU Faculty of Education & HKAPA School of Drama Boost Students Perceived Competence & Confidence with Simulation-Based Learning

Bachelor of Science in Speech-Language Pathology [BSc(SLP)] (formerly Bachelor of Science in Speech and Hearing Sciences, BSc(SHS)), established in 1988, is the first undergraduate programme training speech-language pathologists in Hong Kong. It is a five-year programme, with year 1 and 2 the foundation years and year 3 to 5 the clinical years. Since 2020, the programme has collaborated with School of Drama of The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and introduced a cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional simulation-based learning to the training of speech-language pathology students. This project named “SiMulation with ActoR Teachers (SMART) @ HKU Speech-Language Pathology” was funded by two Teaching Development Grants under the University Grants Committee. This is the first-of-its-kind of cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration in speech-language pathology programme in Hong Kong. The programme is aimed at: 1) promoting better bridging of theory to practice, 2) enhancing students’ communication and noticing skills for better patient-centered care, and 3) boosting students’ self-perceived clinical competence and confidence. The ultimate goal of the programme is to empower students’ clinical learning.

Key innovative features of the “SMART @ HKU Speech-Language Pathology” project

The SMART@HKU SLP project has five key innovative features which can be summarized by the acronym “**I.D.E.A.S**”. The project **I**ntegrated the disciplines of performing arts with speech-language pathology training, providing a **D**iversity of simulation learning experiences for SLP students. All SLP students are provided with an **E**quitable opportunity for learning. In order to promote “theory-practice bridging” in student learning, the programme receives inputs from course teachers and clinical educators for a strategic **A**rticulation between coursework and practicum. At the same time, we engage **S**tudents as teaching & learning partners throughout the project, from planning to execution, to co-develop a simulation curriculum that is student-centered.

In this project, professional actors take on the roles as both simulated patient and educator, hence they are “actor teachers”. Effective communication is one of the core essential qualities to be a competent speech-language pathologist. It is about how to engage the patient, how to communicate with the caregiver, how to perceive and understand the needs of patients and their caregivers. Actor teachers are in a good position to support education on this aspect because they receive professional training in how to engage the audience.

Simulation-based learning was introduced in five courses in BSc(SLP) across year 2 to year 4: Introduction to Clinical Practice, Voice Disorders, Aphasia, Motor Speech Disorders and Swallowing Disorders. A total of 186 BSc(SLP) students and 27 actors participated. Simulated patient training protocols for 28 case scenarios, covering wide variety of types and level of complexity of communication and swallowing disorders were developed. For each course, students completed a questionnaire before and after interacting with simulated patients to reflect on their learning experience.

Key findings

1. Overall, students found the simulation-based learning a rewarding learning experience and were highly satisfied. Students reported a significant increase in their self-perceived clinical skills and also their level of confidence after the simulation-based learning experience.
2. 32.5% of students reported that the simulation-based learning experience was “extremely useful” in bridging theory learned in lectures to clinical practice, with another 53.3% of students reported the experience was “useful”.
3. Almost all students (96.4%) recommended to have more practice with simulated patients in the future.

Future development of SMART@HKU SLP

Clinical simulation is now formalised in the clinical education curriculum from 2023-24 academic year. Students in the BSc(SLP) programme will now have the opportunity to complete 26 hours of simulation learning, as part of their clinical hours, by the end of the five-year programme.

The project has evolved to become our sustainable collaboration with the HKAPA School of Drama. Our project offers internship opportunities for students in School of Drama (e.g., Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) Degree in Drama and Master of Fine Arts in Drama (Applied Theatre, Drama and Education)) as part of their coursework requirement. This sustainability model of cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration will serve as an exemplar in teaching and learning.

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