

COVID PANDEMIC RESPONSE AND RECOVERY – CREATING AN INNOVATIVE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Summary

The #RemoteForensicCSI network was created with an objective to fill an evident science knowledge gap during the Covid-19 pandemic, and to support further and higher education, and industry around the world [1].

A research study was undertaken to assess responses from participants, co-creators, and others via social media. The response highlighted multiple themes including wellbeing, professional development and sustainability.

Ultimately, this network has evolved to include an open-access website hosting all resources and webinar recordings (18,800 views), a YouTube channel (reaching 2,800 views), and global community comprising participants from five continents. Therefore, providing a support mechanism for global disaster response and recovery.

Introduction

In March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Covid-19 virus to be a pandemic [2]. This resulted in a rapid, transformational change to pedagogic practice on a global scale.

During this time, educators were expected to urgently upskill to enable the transition from in-person delivery to the online setting. Whilst certain subject areas had existing resources, there was little to no provision for applied contextualised subjects such as forensic science and criminal justice; comprising the crime scene to laboratory to court settings.

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has a remit for 'Equal Access to for All' [3]. A key component of this is sustainable capacity building through national training institutions, knowledge exchange through establishment of networks, and global development of eLearning. This is integral to the 2030 Agenda: 'No one left behind'.

The #RemoteForensicCSI network is distinctive in that it has innovated teaching and learning, through three mechanisms; providing tools and methods in response to pandemic challenges, improving teaching materials and practices, and developing new digital learning resources in alignment to 21st century skills, where the community is the curriculum [4, 5, 6].

About the study

The aim of this tripartite research study was to investigate the findings in relation to the #RemoteForensicCSI network using:

- A participant questionnaire (following ethical approval)
- Social media analysis (Linked In, Twitter, Instagram)
- Network facilitator case studies

Here is a Wordcloud generated from participants' responses in describing the #RemoteForensicCSI network [1]. The larger the size of the word, the more frequently that particular word appeared. Examples

Key Messages

- ⇒ Collaboration – create a network, with members, by members, for members
- ⇒ Opportunities – utilise the community for mutual professional development
- ⇒ Virtual space – embrace the online world for work, rest, and play
- ⇒ Impact – value accessibility, inclusivity, health and wellbeing
- ⇒ Distanced – recognise experiences of social and geographical isolation



included: 'innovative', 'supportive', 'collaborative', 'engaging', and 'informative'.

Participant comments on social media included: 'exchange of ideas from around the globe', and 'great to see the strengthening of the forensic science teaching community' [1].

The # image, left, represents key words identified within a thematic analysis from the co-creators of

the #RemoteForensicCSI network when reflecting on their individual experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic [1]. Key concepts included 'community', 'support', 'online', 'challenge', and 'accessible'.

The Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences (CSoS) commended the #RemoteForensicCSI initiative 'for the support provided during the Covid-19 pandemic to all educators in the UK... which enabled the high quality of the education in forensic science to be maintained...; the help this initiative provided to the teaching community in such a distressing period ... is undeniable and unparalleled'.

Furthermore, the #RemoteForensicCSI network was nominated as finalists within the Global Academic Development Good Practice Awards, and Learn Sci Teaching Innovation Awards; recognised with a commendation for Global Impact.

Further Study

Following the initial research study, an opportunity to explore the concept of education for sustainable development (ESD) arose. Related to the #RemoteForensicCSI network, this generated six sustainability themes that were visually represented as distinctive coloured icons [7].

These comprised – future facing outlook; wellbeing (and cultural); lifelong learning, global citizenship; environmental stewardship; with social justice, ethics, and economic.

Lifelong learning is viewed as a dimension of heutagogy self-development [8]. The six sustainability themes are shown below:



Therefore, #RemoteForensicCSI has created a paradigm shift, in sharing educational best practice, providing peer support, and informal continual professional development opportunities, initially at a time of international isolation, thus embracing a sustainability and wellbeing ethos.

Conclusions

A criminal justice network named #RemoteForensicCSI was established to support trainers, educators and academics with the rapid transition to online learning, as a result of the global lockdowns within the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially, this was a response to aid the continuity of educational provision within practice, schools, colleges and universities around the world.

However, this innovative collaboration generated unique opportunities for wellbeing support, personal skills development, and a sustainable future facing outlook. This transformative community changed the outlook for criminal justice education worldwide, and is a benchmark exemplar of the power in networks.

This model is suggested as an integral dual mechanism; reactive when activating a disaster response, whilst initiating a proactive recovery situation. Ultimately, translatable to a myriad of subject disciplines.

Recommendations

1. Collaboration - create a network, with members, by members, for members

The power of any community is the people within it, and sharing a dramatic experience can help unify, with an ethos of 'stronger together'. In essence, people are the foundation in underpinning, building and sustaining the network.

2. Opportunities - utilise the community for mutual professional development

A global community offers the ability for reach, value and impact for its members. Sharing expertise and translating it to others, enables an

interchange of expertise and professional developmental in 21st century skills - both synchronous and asynchronous, offering positivity in periods of uncertainty.

3. Virtual space - embrace the online world for work, rest, and play

Digital technology is integral to ensuring connectivity via professional, social and emotional outlets. Communication is key during an incident; whether a solo event or an ongoing incident, in keeping participants informed, updated, and connected.

4. Impact - value accessibility, inclusivity, health and wellbeing

The altruistic nature of a community embraces its members providing in itself a peer support network, where accessibility, inclusivity, health and wellbeing is valued and promoted. Experiencing a period of rapid change and a turbulent life event with others, initiates a compassionate culture.

5. Distance - recognise experiences of social and geographical isolation

It is essential that the network supports members during the period of disruption, and identifies that individuals may be enduring a range of events encompassing physical separation from families, friends, colleagues, within their own personal networks. The power of an online network is in the uniting of community members from within and between different countries and across continents.

References

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