Evaluating the Impact of International Nursing Experiences on Undergraduate Students

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Introduction

Significance of the Research
- Many Canadian nursing programs are offering student opportunities to study abroad. The research question guiding this Mn thesis study was, “How do nursing faculty members describe their teaching methods?”

Background

Canadian Nursing Ethics and Curriculum
Canadian nursing programs meet accreditation standards to provide a broad knowledge base in nursing and generalist preparation (CASN, 2015). Essential components of the program include “knowledge of social justice, population health, environment and global health issues” (CASN, 2015, pp. 11). Such components provide blueprints for a socially responsible and socially critical curriculum that is concerned with social justice on the global scale.

Research Design

Qualitative Description Methodology
- This qualitative, descriptive research aimed to address a gap in the literature by describing Canadian nursing faculty members’ perspectives on successful teaching methods used in study abroad programs.

Sampling and Recruitment
- Five nursing faculty members affiliated with five institutions in Western Canada were interviewed about their experiences teaching undergraduate nursing students in seven international countries between 2015 and 2017.

Data Collection and Analysis
- Interviews were semi-structured, guided by a list of open-ended questions focusing on how faculty members describe successful pedagogical approaches being implemented.
- Verbatim transcripts from each interview were coded which led to identification of commonalities then development of themes.

Findings

Demographics
- Placements were attached to an undergraduate level course (e.g., required community health, acute care, or final project). One faculty member shared teaching methods used in an elective interdisciplinary study abroad program.
- Internationally placed students tended to have additional (rather than different) learning objectives when compared to students on concurrent clinical rotations.
- Student groups ranged in size from one to ten students per faculty member and duration of the international immersion ranged from two to ten weeks. The majority of faculty members traveled abroad with the students. Otherwise, the students were preceptored with an international nurse in association with the local teaching hospital and nursing school.
- Nursing faculty members facilitated and supervised placements in the community with health promotion activities, or in clinical settings alongside international nurses, where the learning is discipline-specific.
- One placement involved a two-way exchange of students, and this country was highly developed (comparable to Canada). The remaining six placements involved students traveling to countries considered less developed than Canada (as per United Nations Development (2017) Program Human Development Index).

Themes
While themes are presented separately, there are connections among concepts (see Table 1). As one faculty member noted, the course concepts, theory and teaching approaches were “woven together” and “difficult to untangle.” Layering a variety of different learning experiences was described as a strategy whereby the faculty member “creates a web of learning.”

Overarching Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subthemes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pedagogical and theoretical underpinnings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global learning</td>
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<td>International partnerships and reciprocity</td>
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<td>Learning to teach and building faculty capacity</td>
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<td>Integrating study abroad with curricula</td>
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<td>Social justice and equity</td>
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<td>Cultural learning</td>
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<td>Transfomer learning</td>
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| 2. Strategies and activities to facilitate students’ learning |
| Preparing students pre-departure |
| Facilitating community engagement and health promotion learning |
| Facilitating nurses-specific learning and development |
| Balancing the challenge with student support |

Table 1. Overarching themes and subthemes

Discussion

Implications
- The findings may provide helpful ideas for faculty members as they plan study abroad programs and learning activities. Findings may also be informative for faculty members who are interested in beginning to teach abroad or help prepare faculty members as they transition into their new role.

Limitations of the Research
- Teaching abroad is multi-faceted, and occurs in a vast variety of contexts. Findings are to be assessed by the reader for transferability to specific programs.

Areas for Future Research
- Experiential and transformative learning for nursing faculty.
- The overlap between the internationalization and indigenization of nursing curricula.
- How to address faculty member concerns regarding sustainability of these international placements.

Conclusions
- This research provided a glimpse into Canadian nursing faculty members’ perspectives on teaching undergraduate nursing students abroad and effective teaching methods.
- Rather than provide best practice guidelines, this study was intended to share the faculty perspective, and provide a better understanding of the teaching processes and successful teaching strategies.

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References

Notes

Figure 1. College of the Rockies and Kenya Medical Training College nursing students collaborating in rural Kenya