Nursing Students’ Experiences with Interdisciplinary Service Learning in Belize

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The purpose of this study was to examine students’ perceptions of the effect of this program on their cultural awareness, nursing, skills, and future professional/personal plans.
Methods

- BSN/MSN students participating in the IMPACT Belize Project in January 2010
- Exploratory qualitative study
- Content analysis of student journals
Themes

- Content analysis conducted using the method described by Hickey & Kipping (1996)
- Nine consistent themes emerged from the analysis
Expectations & Emotions

- “I feel anxious. I’m nervous. I’m excited, but I’m scared. I can’t wait to be there, and even with all the preparation, I still am not sure if I truly know what to expect.”

- “I’m ready to experience a different way of life from the one I live in the United States. To be honest, I’m not scared about anything. I think that mentally I am fairly well prepared for any possibility.”

- “I really want to make a difference in their lives. I expect to learn as much from them as I will be able to teach.”
Reciprocal Relationship with the Community

- “I especially liked the drum lessons and I was honored that they would share such as special tradition with us.”

- I love the feeling of community here, and I love that they are allowing me to be a part of it!”

- “I feel like the pattern of life is slower and I feel slowed down.”
The Value of Interdisciplinary Collaboration

- “This trip has really helped me see how the different disciplines on this trip are interrelated. Our differences and similarities can be drawn upon to form a complete picture of health. In this case together we are getting different views and angles of a situation.”

- “I got to see first hand how the “multidisciplinary” part of our “IMPACT” motto fit in to the clinic. We, as medical professionals, are here to treat their health problems, and they are here to prevent them from occurring again. I think the key is education.”
Knowledge for Future Nursing Practice

- “In my chosen career, I will not have the time to plan and organize everything. I will need to be able to find a solution from what is right around me with creativity and confidence—possibly with no time, or learn to realize that it will come to me when it is time.”

- “It most definitely instilled in me the desire to promote health education throughout my career as a nurse because if people don’t understand their health, how will they ever improve it.”
Personal Growth

“T’m usually a girl with a plan, but since coming here, I’ve really enjoyed taking a step back and watching how things work out. This isn’t always easy for me to do, but I think I’m starting to learn that it might be better for me.”

“Being on this trip has made me realize phones, TV, and internet are not crucial. Sometimes I feel that technology, although it is handy and useful, perhaps it takes away from our creativity.”

“It is weird how a little over a week can have such an impact on you.”
Future Plans to Service

“When I looked up and saw the people from the village, my friends, the laughter and the sense of community, I got chills. I know this is a calling, something I must dedicate my life to.”

“This trip has made me want to travel more and see the world. It has also made me want to do more volunteer efforts in countries that are less fortunate.”
Recognize Themselves as Part of Larger Social Network

- “The people here are very trusting and forthcoming with their thoughts and feelings. I imagine that is because of our ongoing relationships and visits here. I see now why repeat visits are important. Hopefully sometime in the future our work here will have made such an impact that we can travel to another place and make our mark there.”
Shared Responsibility in Society

• “I am a citizen of the world. When a community or any individual has a problem- I have a problem.”

• “I’m finally beginning to understand the concept of being a “world citizen” and it’s a little overwhelming.”

• “But we can’t truly experience what the person on the other end is experiencing until we see and participate in it ourselves.”
The $100 Solution in Belize

• “The last part of the day we discussed our plans for the $100.00 solution. Our group is going to promote the mobile health unit. Our main goal is to help the mobile health unit establish relationships with the people of Gales Point. This is definitely beneficial for the people here. Again we realize that continuing education and healthcare will help prevent complications in the future.”

• “Tonight we began working on our $100 solution. We decided we were going to promote the mobile health unit by funding a community meeting. There were a lot of good ideas brought up tonight in reflection. I think our project impacts me personally because the nurse’s role is health promotion and I also feel like this has a lasting impact on the community as opposed to a one-time ‘fix’.”
Conclusions

- Following this experience students reported an increase in their understanding of another culture and the attainment of knowledge/skills they could use in future nursing practice.
- Students also reported personal growth and a desire to participate in future service projects.
- These findings support the need for the continued provision in nursing of service learning interdisciplinary experiences in the curricula.
Future Plans

- Develop a scale that measures the student attitudes toward interdisciplinary service learning.
- Examine outcome measures of community involvement, volunteerism, and civic engagement.
Service-Learning: A Definition

- A course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students participated in an organized service activity that meets a community need and reflects on their service activity as a means of gaining a deeper understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and enhanced sense of civic responsibility and/or a greater interest in an understanding of community life.

Strenecky, 2010
Basic Principles of Service Learning

- Engagement
- Reflection
- Reciprocity
- Public Dissemination

References


