Exploring Service Learning as a Method to Enhance Professional Nursing Values Development

August 2, 2012
Sigma Theta Tau International’s 23rd International Nursing Research Congress
Brisbane, Australia

Debra L. Fowler, PhD, MBA, RN, CNE
University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
School of Nursing, Houston, Texas
Service learning: What is it?

- Experiential learning
  - Academic instruction
  - Meaningful community service
  - Reflective thinking and analysis
Research question

Do Bachelor of Science in Nursing students who complete a service learning assignment score significantly higher on a measure of professional values compared to a control group of students who complete a leadership assignment?
Experimental design

- **Experimental group**
  - Service to community organization
  - Discussion and reflection

- **Control group**
  - Attend a professional meeting
  - Discussion and describe observations
Instrument

- Nursing Professional Values Scale – Revised
  - Derived from the American Nurses Association (2001) *Code of Ethics for Nurses*
  - Cronbach’s alpha = .92
Data collection & analysis

- Anonymous survey
  - Incentive
- Descriptive statistics
- \( t \)-test for independent groups
Results

- Experimental group \((n = 56)\)
- Control group \((n = 54)\)
- \(t\) test - \(p = .005\)
Findings

Students who completed the service learning assignment scored significantly lower ($p = .005$) on the measure of professional values than control group students.
Discussion

- Experimental group students had no direct contact with service recipients
- Control group students interacted with nurses at a professional meeting
- Use of experimental design
Conclusion

Attending a professional meeting followed by discussion positively impacted professional values scores to a greater extent than a service learning intervention.
Implications

- Service learning should be closely evaluated in relation to desired learning outcomes
- Traditional experiential teaching methods are valuable educational strategies
Further research

- Additional studies using well-controlled, experimental methods
- Replicate with face-to-face service to care recipients
- Replicate using different control strategy
Questions & Discussion

Thank you for attending!