Value of Online Group Reflection following International Service Learning Experiences:

I Never Thought of That!

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Faculty Disclosure

- **Eileen M. Smit, RN, MSN, FNP-BC**
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Learner Objectives

At the completion of the presentation the learner will be able to:

- Discuss the value of reflection as a teaching strategy
- Describe the results of a qualitative study of individual and group student reflections following an international service learning program
- Discuss implications for practice
Exploratory descriptive study design was used to describe and identify themes of student reflections and to compare the level of reflection between two groups of students’ following a cultural immersion service learning program in Honduras.
Reflection as Learning Tool

Reflection: Method to access, make sense of and learn from experience (Johns, 1995)

Widely accepted learning tool in professional education, particularly in nursing (Plack, 2005)
Reflection

Providing students with the opportunity to reflect on their clinical experiences promotes and increases experiential learning (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2010).

Particularly important when experiences challenge individual’s previously held beliefs and practices.
Background

Interdisciplinary course that focused on students developing an understanding of the world as a diverse and interrelated community
Background

Students expected to explore the personal/professional impact of international service-learning experiences.
Background

Student Activities
- Teaching in schools and clinics
- Conducting physical assessments
- Visits to health care facilities
Background

Student activities:
- Advocacy with local government officials
- Meetings with community members
Background

Use of reflection as teaching strategy

Daily group discussions while in Honduras
  • Students together

Written reflections after return to United States
  • Students off campus
  • Completed during the two weeks after return
  • Individual vs. group discussion guidelines
Student Guidelines on Questions related to Reflection.

2009: Students will write an individual reflection paper after our return from Honduras.
2012: Students will participate in an on-line group reflection discussion after our return from Honduras.

Both Groups: The reflection discussion encompasses all of the course objectives. It provides an overview of the student’s experiences related to the course. This is a personal discussion and does not require reference citations and should be written in first person. Each day you will be journaling about experiences. Journal entries can include your activities, feelings, thoughts, judgments and what you learned about yourself. Your journal entries will likely be helpful in participating in this discussion.

Areas that you might consider include the following but you are not expected to address each topic or to answer the questions as if they are a list. These are meant to help you focus your thoughts but you should focus your paper in a manner that is meaningful to you.

- Reflections on the relationship of your experience to expectations for the trip.
- Reflections on how the trip relates to your career goals.
- Reflections on the challenges you experienced. Did you expect to experience these challenges?
- Do you believe this experience will affect your ways of thinking, plans or goals for the future?
- Are there questions you have as a result of the experience?
- What could have been done to better prepare you for this experience?
- What could have been done better to support you during the experience?
- What were positive aspects of the experience for you?
- What were negative aspects of the experience for you?
- If you were to describe the experience to other students, what would you say is the value of the experience? Who should participate in this experience and who should consider other options?
- Reflections related to the group and group processes are also very relevant to the experience.
Study Participants

First group consisted of 14 students who traveled to Honduras in 2009 and wrote individual papers reflecting upon their experiences and learning after they had returned to the United States.

Second group consisted of 19 students who traveled to Honduras in 2012 and participated in an online group reflection discussion of their experiences and learning after they returned to the United States.
Assessment of Level of Reflection

Four category scheme developed by Kember, McKay, Sinclair and Wong (2008)

Can be used for research purposes to determine effectiveness of approaches that promote reflection (Teaching & Educational Development Institute, 2013)

Four categories
1. Non-reflection
2. Understanding
3. Reflection
4. Critical reflection
Findings

The students who participated in the online group reflection discussion were more likely to critically reflect upon their experiences and the impact of these experiences on future practice than the students who wrote individual reflection papers.
Findings

- Two of the 14 students (14%) who wrote individual papers reflecting upon their experiences and learning after they had returned to the United States demonstrated critical reflection of their experiences.

- Thirteen of 19 students (68%) who participated in an online group reflection discussion of their experiences and learning after they returned to the United States demonstrated critical reflection of their experiences.
Findings

Students who participated in the online group discussion reflected upon more topics than the students who wrote individual reflection papers.
Findings

- The students participating in online group reflection became aware that other students shared similar responses to their experiences.
- Responses from other students prompted their further reflection.
- Written reflection allowed them to take time to read/consider other’s comments.
Topics Discussed 2009 Group

Sources
Student 9 09
Student 7 09
Student 6 09
Student 5 09
Student 4 09
Student 3 09
Student 2 09
Student 14 09
Student 13 09
Student 12 09
Student 11 09
Student 10 09
Student 1 09
Student 8 09

Nodes
Themes\Valuing Family
Community
Themes\Media Impact
Themes\Language Difficulty
Themes\Impact on career
Themes\Honduran Hospitality
Trust
Themes\Frustration with inability to help
Themes\Culture appreciation, questioning own value
Themes\Children Interactions
Themes\Challenges of Experience
Themes\Awareness of Honduran health issues and poverty impact
Themes\Appreciation for own resources
Themes\Advocacy Importance
Topics Discussed 2012 Group (14 students)

**Sources**
- Student 7 12
- Student 6 12
- Student 5 12
- Student 3 12
- Student 2 12
- Student 19 12
- Student 18 12
- Student 17 12
- Student 15 12
- Student 14 12
- Student 13 12
- Student 12 12
- Student 10 12
- Student 1 12

**Nodes**
- Themes\Valuing Family Community
- Themes\Questioning US HC
- Themes\Media Impact
- Themes\Learned from Hondurans
- Themes\Language Difficulty
- Themes\Impact on career
- Themes\Honduran Hospitality Trust Gratitude
- Themes\Frustration with inability to help
- Themes\Culture appreciation, questioning own value
- Themes\Confidence in Skills
- Themes\Children Interactions
- Themes\Challenges of Experience
- Themes\Awareness of Honduran health issues and poverty impact
- Themes\Appreciation for own resources
- Themes\Advocacy Importance
Findings

After further analysis, the 15 topics of student reflections were consolidated and collapsed into six (6) themes
Findings

Themes

- Appreciation of the Honduran culture and people (29 students)
- 2: Impact of Poverty and American Influence on Honduran Community. (24 students)
- 3: Increased awareness and valuing of the own resources (22 students)
Findings (continued)

Themes

- 4: Impact of experience on career (19 students)
- 5: Wanting to do more to help (17 students)
- 6: Challenges of service learning experience (14 students)
**Implications for Practice**

- Reflection as teaching strategy promotes critical thinking
- Group discussion of reflections may promote critical thinking to greater extent than individual reflections
- Online group discussion of experiences among students encourages meaningful dialogue and promotes broader/wider review of experiences
References

Questions? Contact Information

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