

Title:

Using Service Learning to Enhance Cognitive Development of Nursing Research for Complex Social Issues

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Session Title:

Innovative Evidence-Based Strategies for BSN Education

Slot:

F 01: Friday, 28 July 2017: 2:30 PM-3:45 PM

Scheduled Time:

2:50 PM

Keywords:

Nursing research, Service Learning and Social issues

References:

Adegbola, M. (2013). Relevance of service learning to nursing education. *Association of Black Nursing Faculty*, Spring 24(2): 39.

Mengel, A., & McLaughlin, B. (2012). Caring for our community: Service learning in the nursing curriculum. *Diversity and Democracy: Association of American Colleges and Universities*, 15 (3): Retrieved: <https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/caring-our-community-service-learning-nursing-curriculum>

Abstract Summary:

Service-learning can be a structured educational experience that links classroom knowledge to community engagement. The understanding and application of nursing research can be enhanced through the interaction of nursing students among diverse communities and their organizations as they gain insight on complex social issues.

Learning Activity:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE
Define service learning and its process	I. Definition of service learning a. Varying perceived definitions b. Overall objective of the process.
Identify a common goal of service learning for the baccalaureate student nurse.	II. Structure of service learning in nursing a. Wide variations of the process. b. Description of the process with a BSN program
Discuss potential social issues and their project potential that could enhance understanding and application of nursing research.	III. Construct of one organization and its outcomes. a. Teaching pregnant teens in high school. b. Mentoring teenage boys into the father role. c. Prenatal classes to include birth and postpartum d. Newborn care classes.

Discuss ways to evaluate cognitive development.	IV. Evaluation a. Ongoing oral logs as opposed to written. b. Discussion of individual strengths and weakness (both student and aggregate) c. Resolution of current crises (both student and aggregate) d. Recognition of need for changes (both student and aggregate)
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Abstract Text:

Service-learning is loosely defined as a structured educational experience that links classroom knowledge to community engagement. At its best, it accommodates student growth via self-examination to find those qualities within that enable a successful transition for the common good of a community. At its worst, it may stymie association with others, be they student peers or members of a diverse culture within the community. The overall objective is to serve as an initiation into the concrete world of the lives of those rarely encountered by the student nurse in his/her typical setting in order to provoke self-reflection, compassion, selflessness, social awareness and, above all, cognitive development and insight. The succinct substance of service learning is that the combination of the two adds value to each and transforms both.

Since service learning exposes students to various situations and organizations, this provides them with the means to see firsthand the various social injustices and cultural barriers that exist in local communities. This, in turn, will hopefully produce students who are better prepared to deal with the complex social issues that plague are global populaces. Although service learning has been incorporated into baccalaureate programs for at least the past 20 years, there has been little standardization as to its implementation. Actual student involvement seems to range from rigorous community participation with close integration into academic study to one week intensive service activities that are essentially unrelated to classroom concepts. Our BSN program has chosen to implement the concept through a one-year (two semester) community health course that involves assigning groups of students to various organizations within our community. These groups range from faith-based to drug court to assisted living to pregnant teens, breastfeeding promotion and prenatal education. Each group is directed by a faculty member who only serves as a resource. It is up to each group of students to assess their aggregate, make diagnoses that are indicated from the assessment and then plan and implement their choices. This process introduces students into communal regions of which they personally have little knowledge, i.e., addicts in drug court and pregnant teenage girls.

The measure of a community's needs can often be determined through the infant mortality rate as it reflects the quality of prenatal and birth care available to both children and mothers and is a critical indicator of the overall health and welfare of a nation. Our state's infant mortality rate is higher than the national average at 6.8/1000 and the highest rate is within our own community at 9.1/1000 (Virginia.gov, 2014a). Introducing nursing students to this culture and population can serve to challenge their assumptions and bring stereotypical preconceptions to the surface. Working within and interacting with this population serves to present alternative viewpoints of issues that may conflict with what the experts profess. This revelation has provided a stimulus for the students to search the literature and nursing research to justify and compare what they observe from what they read. It has also instilled within many of them a need to be socially and politically active. The key, however, to obtaining this understanding comes with continuing faculty/student interactions through verbal 'logs' and persistent questioning. Activities that have been enhanced and developed from this group have included teaching prenatal classes at a local health clinic and high school as well as developing teen father support and educational groups. Many of the activities were developed by the students themselves after perceiving a need and discussing it with the aggregate.

Willingness to change and adapt together with somewhat informal faculty/student meetings has provided the majority of these students with the ability to establish a positive attitude toward civic engagement and a better understanding of complex social issues. This was achieved by providing a quasi-structured environment through various local organizations that play a specific role within the respective community. To summarize a few of the objectives, these students achieved the ability to analyze the complexity of a problem and devise solutions rather than focus on individual deficiencies which resulted in cognitive development.