



UTILIZING TEAM DEBATE TO INCREASE STUDENT ABILITIES FOR MENTORING AND CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF GLOBAL HEALTH CARE IN DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE PROGRAMS

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Although graduates of doctor of nursing practice (DNP) programs are expected to demonstrate competence in advanced clinical scholarship, mentoring, and leadership, little is published about how team debate on a global health care topic supports DNP student learning and skill development. This article reports on an illuminative evaluation of DNP student learning experiences of team debate in the context of a 2-week international school program in Ireland. A focused illuminative evaluation approach involving a cohort of seven DNP students, who had participated in an international school team debate, was used. Data were collected using a Web-based qualitative questionnaire designed to elicit in-depth reflective accounts of DNP students' learning experiences. Content analysis revealed that team debate on a global health care topic enhanced learning in relation to fostering critical thinking and critical appraisal skills; encouraging teamwork; providing opportunities for mentoring, relationship building, and socialization into profession; and, from the DNP student perspective, increasing knowledge and global understanding of health care. This evaluation provides insights for nurse educators into the benefits of introducing team debate as a group activity to enhancing scholarly inquiry and mentoring skills of DNP students. Further research to evaluate team debate in other nurse education programs is needed. (Index words: Team debate; Critical appraisal; Doctor of nursing practice (DNP) program; Global health care; Mentoring; Graduate study abroad; Team building; Peer learning) *J Prof Nurs 32:224–234, 2016. © 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.*

THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) provides strategic policy guidance to nurse educators regarding the curriculum development of doctoral programs in advanced nursing practice.

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At doctor of nursing practice (DNP)-prepared level, nurses are expected to have advanced clinical scholarship and advanced clinical leadership competencies that will enable them to lead change to advance health and nursing science (AACN, 2006, 2014). In recognition of the key role that advanced practice nurses have in leading change, one recommendation within the *Institute of Medicine's The Future of Nursing: Leading Change and Advancing Health* (2010) is to double the number of nurses with a doctorate by 2020. The challenge for nurse educators, therefore, involves a reenvisioning of graduate education with the program objective of preparing nurse leaders not only in the area of practice development but also in key areas of initiating change at strategic levels of executive leadership and health care policy (AACN, 2014). Critical appraisal skills in order to be able to

construct evidence-based, analytical, and robust arguments are essential as a means to making a case for health care innovation and patient care delivery with policy makers, executive level health care directors, and senior researchers. Although clinical scholarship and competence in analytical methods for evidence-based practice are essential learning outcomes in DNP-level education programs (AACN, 2006) and debates are an effective teaching strategy in enhancing health care professionals' critical thinking skills (Charrois & Appleton, 2013; Hall 2011; Hanna et al., 2014), there are few examples in the literature that evaluate the contribution of team debate in DNP education programs. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to report on a focused evaluation study that was based on an illuminative evaluation (Parlett & Hamilton, 1976) approach and to present the findings from a Web-based on-line DNP student qualitative survey questionnaire (Jansen, 2010). The aim of the evaluation was to identify the value of using Oxford-style team debate as a pedagogical approach within a 2-week international school program in Ireland to enhancing the scholarly inquiry and team-building-related skills of DNP students.

Background

Using Debate to Enhance Critical Appraisal and Communication Skills in DNP Education

Preparing DNP candidates to be critical thinkers and effective communicators in complex and evolving health care environments is an essential standard for advanced nursing practice education programs (AACN, 2006). Besides being expert clinicians, nurse practitioners are expected to be leaders and need the skills to communicate effectively some innovative and evidence-based arguments to a wide range of audiences such as policy makers, executive managers, professional organizations, and other health care professionals. In order to facilitate this skill development during the international school program, the program director designed a critical debate on a global health care topic as an educational strategy for enhancing critical thinking and professional communication skills.

Debates are considered an effective educational strategy for active learning, improving critical thinking, logical reasoning, and communication skills particularly in higher education and health care programs (Charrois & Appleton, 2013; Doody & Condon, 2012; Hall, 2011; Healey 2012; Kennedy, 2007; Shah et al, 2013) and in the study of complex health care topics (Nguyen & Hirsch, 2011). At DNP level, the skills developed in the process of preparing and presenting a critical debate (see Table 1), on the international school topic "that you receive better healthcare in Ireland than in the USA," are highly relevant to the advanced nurse practitioner and leadership role contexts. An Oxford-style debate was considered appropriate not only because of its established roots in Oxford University as a scholarly debating society since 1823 and its reputation for high-quality debates that

Table 1. Skill Development for Debate

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating focused and high-impact arguments: Each speaker is allocated 5 minutes to present, which means that students have to select, prioritize, and summarize their key points/arguments. Target audience includes policy makers, executive level health care/nurse managers, senior research, and faculty members. • Constructing evidence-based, analytical, and robust arguments/cases: Students are tasked with evaluating the quality of information/research and using the highest level/quality of information from recognized sources to construct their arguments. Consideration of alternative or counterarguments is also important to the process of constructing a robust argument. • Collaborative teamwork: Assigned to either the "for" or "against" team, doctoral and undergraduate students are tasked with working together so that all members contribute to sourcing high-quality evidence, brainstorming for novel ideas and challenging status quo points-of-view, actively listening to all team members' contributions, constructing logical evidence-based arguments and, during the debate presentation, identifying rebuttal arguments to support the team members. • Effective oral communication to high-level audience: The debate presentation format is a public debate attended by invited members of the faculty, university, and nursing community and is judged by a three-member adjudication panel from host faculty.
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attract famous international speakers in a free exchange of ideas but also because it provided for a competitive style of scholarly debating, informed students about what to expect during a formal debate, and provided clarity around the rules of engagement for debate team members. The formal structure follows that the debate sequence starts with the first speaker for the proposition team, and then, each team member from the opposition and proposition teams presents their arguments in turn. Time allocated for each speaker to present is predetermined, and speakers are required not to exceed the agreed maximum length of time. Rebuttals or challenges are usually addressed during the debate, and the debate ends with each team presenting their closing speech. The winning team is decided by a majority vote with the audience or adjudication panel casting the vote on which team provided the more persuasive arguments.

In professional work situations, particularly in relation to high-level strategic, executive, or policy meetings when the time allocated to each agenda item may be brief or participants are competing/lobbying for scarce resources, advanced nurse practitioners need to be highly effective in how they present their information and argue their case. With this in mind, the international school students were tasked with preparing focused, high-impact cases/arguments that were appropriate for an audience of policy makers, executive managers, and health care experts and limited to a 5-minute presentation time. The standard of the information used to support their case was expected to be the "best available evidence." Due consideration of alternative ideas or potential oppositions was also expected in order to

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