



A virtual caravan—A metaphor for home-internationalization through social media: A qualitative content analysis



Engle A. Chan ^{a,*}, Maj-Helen Nyback ^b

^a School of Nursing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong

^b YH Novia/Novia University of Applied Sciences, Seriegatan 65320, Finland

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Accepted 30 January 2015

Keywords:

Internationalization
Home
Cultural competency
Constructivist learning
Uncertainty

ABSTRACT

Background: An internationalized curriculum in nursing education was created in response to the rise of globalization and the need to provide nursing care to people of diverse cultures. Through technology, internationalization at home can facilitate intercultural experiences for more nursing students.

Objectives: The aim of this study is to explore and describe how a virtual course in intercultural communication between students of two universities, through internationalization at home, can support the development of cultural competence.

Design: Qualitative research

Participants: Junior year nursing students

Method: Qualitative content analysis of transcribed written and oral presentations during a course on intercultural communication.

Results: Four major themes, which are not mutually exclusive, were identified.

Conclusion: Through this intercultural experience, without leaving home, students uncovered their cultural selves and others based on their own reflective understanding and collaborative discourse with each other and the use of social media for communication. Through experiential intercultural encounters beyond textbook and online materials, they learned to appreciate each other as people with cultural differences yet with much in common, and to recognize their assumptions and the value of subtleties and nuances. They were able to explore solutions within an unfamiliar context through their own efforts and with the support of peers and teachers. This led to a deeper understanding of cultural sensitivity and competence.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

As our society has become increasingly globalized, it is essential to increase the capacity of our students to be interculturally effective (Hodges, 2011). Health/nursing education must therefore be redesigned (Baernholdt et al., 2013) to enable students to become culturally competent practitioners. Cultural competence is an ongoing process of personal maturation. The need to develop cultural competence in nursing is, however, an issue for institutions of higher education. Many institutions advertise their international experience (Berg et al., 2012). Low levels of cultural competence have been noted among undergraduate nursing students (Sealey et al., 2006), and developing home-internationalization programs for the majority of students who lack the opportunity to travel abroad remains a challenge (Bentao, 2011).

Background

In a context where the majority of students do not have the opportunity to travel to other countries to develop their cultural capacity, new ideas on cultural education programs are needed (Bratwaite and Majundar, 2006). This understanding has led to the concept of Internationalization at Home (IaH), which is about “academic learning that blends the concepts of self, strange, foreign, and otherness” (Teekens, 2006, p. 17). With the advance of distance learning technology, some institutions are turning to a model of IaH, whereby students are able to develop their cultural capacity without leaving home (Green and Whitsed, 2012). This model situates personal awareness and reflexivity in our encounters with others whom we see as different from ourselves, and who likewise perceive us as different from them (Haigh, 2009). There is a need for more tolerance and respect for each other’s culture, (Kramsch, 2002) with an ability to think beyond one’s own framework. Intercultural learning, or the development of cultural competence, is often carried out in a traditional classroom setting with perhaps the use of some online materials about theories on cultural competence.

Campinha-Bacote’s (2011) theory on how students learned “The process of cultural competence in the delivery of health care services”

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +852 2766 4131; fax: +852 2364 9663.
E-mail addresses: e.angela.chan@polyu.edu.hk (E.A. Chan),
Maj-Helen.Nyback@novia.fi (M.-H. Nyback).

is an inspiration for this study. To be culturally competent is to have cultural encounters. Learning from exposure to cultural differences has often been overlooked as the obvious starting point in intercultural learning.

The essence of exposure in intercultural learning can be conducted through indirect contact with the use of advanced technology. Direct or indirect contact with people from various ethnic groups leads to intercultural learning (King et al., 2013). Pettigrew et al. (2011) also revealed the benefits of indirect contact for intercultural learning. Cultural competence is considered to be a continuous process of personal maturation. This process is characterized by an increase in self-awareness and in the ability to see from the other's perspective, thereby improving a person's ability to identify conflicting values and expectations during interactions, and raising one's willingness to identify mutually acceptable solutions and to behave in a culturally flexible manner (Koskinen et al., 2009).

In facing the challenge of preparing new nursing graduates to enter an increasingly complex, diverse, and uncertain environment, there is a need for an innovative teaching pedagogy on intercultural learning. A model based on a constructivist learning environment seems promising (Jonassen, 1991). In constructivism, learning is described as constructed when an individual attaches meaning to an experience or activity based on his or her prior knowledge; learning is a process that involves meaning and values (Hunter and Krantz, 2010). Learning can also be seen as social (Rutherford, 2012), whereby learners explore old and new ideas through collaborative discourses and reflections and construct new meaning through conversations with each other and with the teacher. As students attempt to resolve ill-defined or unstructured problems, they develop "habits of exploring complex adaptive systems contextually" (Hodges, 2011 p. 7). Constructivism and active learning have been adopted as the pedagogical philosophies underpinning this study. Active learning through engagement with unfamiliar and uncertain contexts is essential for students to acquire the ability to adapt, improvise, connect, and identify emerging patterns (Plek and Greenhalgh, 2001).

While much has been written about students who are able to travel abroad, little attention has been paid to those who are unable to do so (Jon, 2013). They deserve consideration, as they comprise the largest group of students. This study explores the potential of such students to develop cultural competence through the approach of internationalization at home.

Methods

Participants and Settings

The purposive sampling of first-year nursing students was carried out in the elective course on intercultural communication in nursing offered at the Novia University of Applied Sciences (Novia UAS) and in the course on caring concepts taught at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU), in both of which cultural care and caring were expected learning outcomes. The sample consisted of 20 students in the baccalaureate degree program, 10 from each university, ranging in age from 19 to 28. Some were admitted from community colleges, while others had completed their upper secondary education or had a foreign degree. Some information about the project on internationalization at home was announced in class. Those interested in the project approached the respective researchers for more information. Information about the project and the various assessments were provided until the students had no further questions. The students understood the project and allowed the researchers to use the data collected from their courses for research. Before obtaining the students' consent to participate in the project, they were informed about their right to withdraw at any time without any penalty. Peer review was provided by members of Novia's Ethical Committee.

The learning materials were uploaded onto a Moodle (a modular objective-oriented dynamic learning environment) platform, to which students in Hong Kong had access as part of their Open University studies at Novia UAS. In Moodle, a discussion forum was developed for students to conduct discussions with each other and with their teachers. Students were paired up, one from HKPU and one from Novia UAS, for joint written assignments on cultural competence in nursing. The intention was for students to learn about each other's values, meanings, and beliefs concerning health, well-being, caring, and nursing.

When arranging a virtual course with limited supervision, it is crucial to clearly state what is expected of the students. Teachers gave general guidance on the online theoretical content, explained the desired learning outcomes, and gave assessments at the completion of the course, but the rest was left to the learners' flexibility, adaptability, and creativity.

With this design, the course had a degree of uncertainty for the students. The students were asked to find common solutions for the problems that they discovered. The supervisors at both universities supported the students in their problem solving and also provided supportive tutorials. The students subsequently participated in a seminar through Skype, where the pairs presented to the whole group what they learned from, about, and with each other, based on the assignment and their further reflections on the process of learning how to become culturally sensitive and competent.

Data Collection and Analysis

The collected data consisted of the students' individual assignment, the joint assignment, and the individual reflections submitted after the seminar. All of the data were transcribed and used as one unit of analysis. An inductive approach was employed in the analysis and the process of qualitative content analysis described by Elo and Kyngäs (2008) was followed. An approach based on inductive data moves from the specific to the general, so that particular statements and reflections are recorded then combined into a larger whole or general statement. Open coding was used in the analysis, with the data being grouped in clusters, forming several categories and, later, themes. The process of abstraction continued until all of the themes were formed and each theme was named using words that characterized the contents. The content analysis generated four major themes, with categories under each theme, as shown in Table 1.

Results

Virtual Caravan

The virtual caravan is described through the categories "Extended information," "Inspiration," and "Teamwork." The theme conveys the meaning that the learning outcome is more than just learning about the other's culture—it can be seen as a form of "informal learning," which is predominately unstructured and experiential.

The students learned not only from and about each other, but also about themselves. This insight from a small group working on cultural competence led to the description of the course experience as a virtual caravan. The students saw that they could make a real difference. This can be seen in following quotation.

Together we can make a difference. We are just a small group, but if this continues we would be like a virtual caravan carrying wisdom.

The students also stated that that the richness and challenges of the learning experience inspired them to construct new understandings and enlarged their knowledge. They put effort into finding solutions to problems, since the desire to learn about the other was worth the hard work. The students were also "courageous" in stepping out of their comfort zones to engage in this specific course and way of learning.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/367924>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/367924>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)