Use of Film in Teaching Multiculturalism to Future Nurse Educators

Changing demographics of nursing students dictates that nursing faculty be competent in the concepts of multicultural education and cultural competence. Likewise, nursing faculty must be adept at providing an inclusive classroom for all students regardless of cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Billings & Halstead, 2009). In teaching future nurse educators, the concepts of cultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitudes must be incorporated into the curriculum (Campinha-Bacote, 2003). Adult learners thrive on real-life examples and engaged, active learning opportunities. The author sought to identify a teaching strategy that incorporates the concepts of multicultural education and cultural competence into an engaged learning opportunity for graduate students majoring in nursing education.

Film was used to teach concepts of multiculturalism to future nurse educators. This exemplar highlighted important key concepts of cultural competence and successful strategies for teaching students of varied cultural backgrounds. Twenty-two graduate students majoring in nursing education who were taking an introductory nursing education course watched the film Freedom Writers (Devito, Shamberg, Sher, & LaGravenese, 2007) a realistic account of a High School English teacher in Long Beach, California, whose students were from varied and often conflicting cultural and ethnic backgrounds. She struggled with finding ways to engage and connect with her students. More importantly, she was challenged to facilitate communication and interaction among the students and provide a rich learning environment.

Afterward, the students discussed prompts posed by the nursing professor to stimulate further dialogue on the topic. Prompts were first discussed in small groups of 5 to 6 students and then were discussed as an entire class. Sample discussion prompts included: Why is it important to teach nursing students and practicing nurses about caring for clients of varied cultural backgrounds? What does an “inclusive” classroom mean? How was this represented in the film? Describe how the diverse classroom highlighted in the movie enhanced the experience for both the students and the teacher. Despite their self-report of feeling very comfortable with cultural and ethnic topics, few teachers take these topics into the classroom. Why is this the case?

On completing the course, electronic surveys were sent to the students, and there was a 90% response rate. All students were women, and the majority were Caucasian and had more than 10 years of nursing experience. They reported possessing a variety of learning preferences, including visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic, with 90% stating that the film appealed to their learning preference. Approximately half of the students felt that their prior knowledge of teaching multicultural students in the classroom was adequate prior to watching the film. The majority (95%) preferred watching the film over traditional lecture for the topic of multiculturalism. Ninety percent acknowledged that their interest in multiculturalism had been stimulated as a result of watching this film. All students reported that the film provided a realistic example of multiculturalism, with 95% indicating that their knowledge about this topic was enhanced as a result.

A comment section was included in the survey to elicit more qualitative data. One respondent shared the following:

I enjoyed the movie very much and believe that it really pulled the textbook together as far as learning strategies, cultural diversity, learning styles, [and] pressure students are under due to the environment and other factors, and it portrayed the realistic administrative challenges associated with multiple areas of teaching. It demonstrated multiple areas covered in our textbook and portrayed the teacher’s determination to overcome every obstacle she faced in and out of the classroom. It was very inspirational. Another added:

The movie showed aspects of the subject material that could not have been taught as well in a lecture. I also feel it was a good way to stimulate discussion in the small group discussion. I really thought it was a powerful tool for learning.

The use of film not only provided an effective way to present the concepts of multicultural education and cultural competency, but also was an engaging opportunity for the learner. Students responded that it addressed a multitude of learning styles represented in the class and that it stimulated their interest and enhanced their learning on the topic. Film was preferred over traditional lecture and provided a realistic example for adult learners on educating multicultural students. Recommendations are to continue the use of this teaching strategy for future offerings of this course and to explore additional ways that film can be used as an active teaching strategy for a variety of topics in nursing.

References


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