Curricular Innovation to Integrate the Art and Science of Nursing

Conventional pedagogy is not sufficient to prepare capable nurses for the complexities and realities of the current and future practice milieu. A defined visual art experience blends the art and science of nursing, lending itself to learning in the affective domain while applying narrative pedagogy. Reading, writing, thinking, imagining, and interpreting dialogue are core components of narrative pedagogy (Ewing & Hayden-Mills, 2011). Word cloud software captures these elements by incorporating computer and Web-based technology. Software programs, such as Tagxedo® and Wordle®, are examples of Web-based applications for generating word clouds from text. The clouds infer the significance of the words by assigning the font size according to how frequently the word appears in the targeted text, resulting in a visual collage that can be manipulated with color, fonts, sizes, and layouts. Essentially, these word cloud applications are instructional tools that summarize ideas and identify important concepts surrounding an often anxiety-laden course, especially if students are not comfortable engaging with children. During the first class session, students were asked to anonymously list and submit three words that come to mind when reflecting on the word pediatrics. From these reflections, a word cloud was created (Figure). The most commonly noted words allowed for the acknowledgment of shared concerns within a student group. Recent word summaries surrounding this learning exercise generated large font sizes for words such as scary, crying, fun, medication, errors, kids, screaming, and parents, providing a springboard to ensure that faculty address these concepts and concerns. Students were amazed with how often their own anxiety equated that of others.

In a graduate professional issues course, groups of four to six students debated contemporary topics in health care based on information gathered from the professional literature and lay media. To educate fellow students in advance of the formal debate session, the students were encouraged to present their findings in a creative and memorable way. One group selected the topic of hospital consumer assessment of health care providers and systems. They located current articles in the nursing literature, summarized each article with a Wordle word cloud, and presented their findings to the class. Student feedback and course evaluations documented students’ ability to integrate critical concepts using this technology. Teamwork, collaboration, and increased appreciation for the art and science of nursing were also evident.

The use of word cloud software provides a creative and engaging teaching–learning strategy to meet multiple objectives within both undergraduate and graduate curricula. Integrating the humanities in the nursing curriculum advances the objectives of a profession that “operates at the intersection of science and art” (Frei, Alvarez, & Alexander, 2010, p. 676).

Figure. Word cloud of pediatric nursing students’ preclinical reflections.

The application of word cloud technology in an undergraduate pediatrics course focused on the outcome of achieving a greater understanding of students’ assumptions surrounding an often anxiety-laden course, especially if students are not comfortable engaging with children. During the first class session, students were asked to anonymously list and submit three words that come to mind when reflecting on the word pediatrics. From these reflections, a word cloud was created (Figure). The most commonly noted words allowed for the acknowledgment of shared concerns within a student group. Recent word summaries surrounding this learning exercise generated large font sizes for words such as scary, crying, fun, medication, errors, kids, screaming, and parents, providing a springboard to ensure that faculty address these concepts and concerns. Students were amazed with how often their own anxiety equated that of others.

In a graduate professional issues course, groups of four to six students debated contemporary topics in health care based on information gathered from the professional literature and lay media. To educate fellow students in advance of the formal debate session, the students were encouraged to present their findings in a creative and memorable way. One group selected the topic of hospital consumer assessment of health care providers and systems. They located current articles in the nursing literature, summarized each article with a Wordle word cloud, and presented their findings to the class. Student feedback and course evaluations documented students’ ability to integrate critical concepts using this technology. Teamwork, collaboration, and increased appreciation for the art and science of nursing were also evident.

The use of word cloud software provides a creative and engaging teaching–learning strategy to meet multiple objectives within both undergraduate and graduate curricula. Integrating the humanities in the nursing curriculum advances the objectives of a profession that “operates at the intersection of science and art” (Frei, Alvarez, & Alexander, 2010, p. 676).

References

Karen LeDuc, DNP, APN-BC, CNS, CNE, CPN mleduc@regis.edu
Traci Snedden, MS, RN, CPNP, CNE Linda Campbell, PhD, RN, CNE Loretto Heights School of Nursing

The authors have disclosed no potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise. doi:10.3928/01484834-20130620-11