Curriculum Implementation: Virtual International Collaboration and Learning between student nurses from Lund University in Sweden and Virginia University in the United States

Monne Wihlborg, Anneli Jönsson

I. BACKGROUND AND AIM

Collaborative learning between different universities in modern times involves some kind of technology per se (see Dillenbourg et al., 2003; Strijbos et al., 2004a, 2004b, Antonio and afonso, 2006). Collaborative learning through international collaboration between two universities, in Sweden and in the US, has in our example been developed and implemented in two courses within the nursing program. The virtual learning environment and learning activities were constructed by using the Web-based learning platform Moodle (see Duffy et al., 1992; Duffy & Cunningham, 1996; DuFour, 2004; Dolan, 2011). The theme for the initiative was labeled ‘internationalization on home grounds’ which opens up for all students, involving also those who don’t take part in student mobility activities. Thus, the majority will be able to participate in learning activates and develop a cultural awareness useful in today’s ongoing internationalization of health care practices.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK AND IMPLEMENTATION

The learning activity was framed as ‘nursing profession and internationalization’ focusing on ‘patient safety’ (course SJS10:2014, undergraduate program in nursing, Lund University, Faculty of medicine, Health Sciences). The teacher team involved, developed a structure in Moodle and made use of various Moodle features when designing and facilitating the students’ activities. The learning activity the students were to be involved in was constructed and the expected learning outcomes outlined, and then described in the virtual module so that the students had a joint learning platform throughout the collaboration time.

In order to maximize the success factor/effect in primarily supporting the learning community to success we/the team adapted a student collaboration learning focus, including accountability for all students’ papers (work) to be visible. A collaborative approach concerning the joint work in the teacher community was likewise performed, using Adobe connect and open email communication. The virtual module became a part of a curriculum in each of the universities. The pedagogical framework (Mezirow, 2000, 2009a, 2009b; Matusov et al., 2013; Taylor & Jarecke, 2009, Biesta, 2010) in use was compatible with the Bologna Process constructive alignment and its theoretical framework concerning learning (Biggs & Tang, 2007), and furthermore, the concept of deep learning and a student focus (Cuthell, 2002; Marton & Booth, 1997; Wihlborg, 2009; Svensson & Wihlborg, 2010; Nilsson & Wihlborg, 2011; Wihlborg et al., in progress).

III. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The students were not only given the opportunity to explore the subject matter of patient safety and participate in an international collaboration with another university, but also gained universities credits for fulfilling the task. There is a great gain in using virtual collaboration by using modules that are implemented in courses for the purpose to ‘internationalize’ since not all students can participate in student ‘going abroad’ mobility activities. The experiences from both Lund and Virginia Universities were evaluated as a success. Progression in terms of further development throughout the nurse education by implementation of more virtual modules focusing on ‘leadership’.

IV. TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

If planning for implementation of ‘virtual exchange by the use of virtual meetings’ in courses – here focusing on the ‘teachers/educators teamwork’, there is a need for structuring the process and learn from of authors as DuFour (2004), Dolan (2011) among others, in constructing various stages when establishing the teams’ collaborative approach as follows:
• Establish a department ‘teaching & learning’ development team – aiming at starting up for international collaboration (actually at all levels, macro, meso, micro).

• Choose partner faculties acknowledging long-term partnership based on management decisions (must be part of a vision to be embedded in the organizations infrastructure).

• Hold regular meetings and report to management.

• Make the process visible for other members in the education practices.

• Promote internationalization by emphasis on national policy reports.

• Make the participation in internationalization in respective course/program visible in the students ‘diploma/grades/credit’ and when marketing resp., education.

REFERENCES


