Online Role-Play as a Method for Exploring the Issues Surrounding DNP Practice
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Abstract

Statement of Problem
Can DNP students gain realistic experiences from a role play involving key stakeholders in the debate regarding the role of the DNP graduate in the future health care system?

Synthesis of Evidence
Fink (2003) describes significant learning as an educational process that engages students and produces a high energy level for learning. It also results in a significant and lasting change for the students that retains value after a course or project is completed. Role play is a teaching strategy that can result in significant learning. Role play also reflects the constructive theory of learning by creating "personal meaning based on the individual's experiences" (Lievit & Adelman, 2010, p. 229). By taking on the role of a character and leaving their personal self, students can increase awareness of the subject and engage emotionally, resulting in deeper learning (Nelson & Blenkin, 2007).

Description of Innovation
In an online DNP foundations course, one goal was to investigate professional and societal issues surrounding development of the DNP degree. These included such things as the use of the appellation "doctor", restrictions on DNP practice, and the advantages of seeking the degree. Students were already facing some of these issues in their choice to study for a DNP. The intent of the role play was to allow students to respond to questions and challenges in a safe environment while also learning the content needed to support their responses.

Implementation
In the asynchronous role play, students took on new identities, acting as representatives of professional nursing organizations, professional medical organizations, and accrediting agencies; relevant government and legislative agencies; and consumers. A facilitator guided the discussion toward the goals of the role play. The students remained anonymous in their assumed roles giving them the freedom to act in a manner consistent with the role - whether they personally agreed with the character's stance or not. In order to achieve a scholarly outcome, students were required to reference their statements using professional literature and national standards. Upon completion of the role play, students revealed themselves and shared their insights into the character they played and the discussion as a whole.

Evaluation
During the debriefing, faculty and students were uniformly positive in the implementation of DNP practice.

Outcomes

The Value of Role Play

- Constructs a form of active learning (Sellers, 2002)
- Engages students cognitively and emotionally (Nelson & Blenkin, 2007)
- Enhances the ability to enter another person's reality
- Includes psychological, social, & intellectual dimensions (Fink, 2003)
- Improves retention of concepts (Boehle, 2005)
- Offers a safe environment for practicing new skills
- Creates significant learning (Fink, 2003)
- Requires minimal resources

DNP Online Role Play

- Asynchronous
- Anonymous
- Students responses were referenced to the literature or national standards

The Story or “Kickstart for the Role Play”
A federal agency has requested a meeting of key stakeholders in the evolution of the DNP degree and resulting practice. This meeting is intended to provide expert advice to the federal agency on the DNP prior to any major legislation related to DNP education, practice, or reimbursement. The charge to this group is to:
1. identify the advantages and disadvantages of the DNP;
2. outline any restrictions that should be placed on DNP practice; and
3. determine if the appellation “doctor” is appropriate for use by a nurse.
The agency has provided a facilitator and requests that the work be completed in a timely manner. Stakeholders from major professional organizations, regulatory agencies, accreditation agencies, certification organizations, and consumer groups have been invited. The meeting will take place in a federal office building in suburban Washington, D.C.

The Role Play Characters
Facilitator
Representatives for:
- Advanced Practice Certification Organizations
- Professional Nursing Organizations
- Accreditation Agencies
- Professional Medical Organizations
- State Legislators
- Consumers

Value of Online Role Play

- Permits reflection before responding
- Learner centered
- Active participation of students
- Increased interest and engagement

Lessons Learned

- The size of the group matters
- Students need clear instructions
- Faculty participation as the facilitator aids in achieving learning goals
- Non-verbal behavior is absent
- Role play is a useful method for debating controversial issues
- Research comparing online and face-to-face learning outcomes would be useful in designing other significant learning activities

Poster Objectives

1. Explain how an online, asynchronous role play can be used to create significant learning for DNP students.
2. Explore the value of online role play compared to a face-to-face experience.
3. Describe the scholarly outcomes of an online role play focused on the issues surrounding the development and implementation of DNP practice.

Course Objectives for Role Play

1. Explore perspectives of professional organizations, health policy groups, regulatory agencies, certifying organizations, and other key stakeholders regarding the development and implementation of the DNP.
2. Analyze views of stakeholders involved in the development of the DNP.

References


