The Integration of Student-Centered Approach for Field Trip in Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing Practicum: Case Studies among Third Year Nursing Students of Assumption University of Thailand

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Abstract

This classroom action research aimed to examine the third year Assumption University nursing students’ opinions toward the integration of student-centered approach for field trip in Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing Practicum. Eight nursing students were purposive sampled and data collection was derived by focus group discussion. Content analysis and analytic induction were applied. The results found that nursing students prepared themselves before field trip by meeting to choose their leaders, set up field trip objectives, and delegated responsibilities to others. The benefits gained from field trip were receiving more knowledge, practicing working as a group and cooperating with other people. But the most important benefit was they knew how to seek knowledge by themselves which this good point was occurred by changing the roles of teachers as facilitators, mentors, and consultants. The results suggested that student-centered approach should be implemented in advance in nursing education as a lifelong learning.

Keywords: student-centered approach, field trip, mental health and psychiatric nursing.

Introduction

After the Thailand’s National Education Act of 1999 came into effect, there was an extraordinary change of teaching-learning style and educational system as well. Furthermore, the Chapter 4 of the Act focuses on National Education Guidelines, of which the Section 22 states that, “Education shall be based on the principle that all learners are capable of learning and self-development, and are regarded as being most important. The teaching-learning process shall aim at enabling the learners to develop themselves at their own pace and to the best of their potentiality” (ONEC 2002). The Thai government provided a large number of subsidy in education reform in order to improve the quality of education in Thailand and to fulfill the optimum goal of education reform that emphasized on developing super ideal learner to be the smart, good, and happy person (ONEC 2000).

In education reform era, the reform covers all aspects including educational policy, management, teaching-learning, and learner. Cardinal Poupard said that, “Education therefore, aims not merely at information but rather at formation, at molding and shaping. In doing so, it touches and transforms both teacher as well as teaching. While learning can be imparted, formation imbibed. Not what the teacher teaches, but rather what he is that counts: not what is taught but rather what is caught that matters” (Poupard, cited after Srivichairaratana 2006).

Teaching-learning in nursing education is the process to prepare graduated nurses who have achieved academic excellence and professional skills appropriately to care the clients. Basically, the process of teaching-
learning consists of theory and practicum in the health-care settings. From the seminar/workshop of the Faculty of Nursing Science, Assumption University, the vision was revised which stated life-long learning as the core value of nursing faculties and graduates and needed to promote through student-centered approach (FNS Five Year Plan 2005).

Division of Health Promotion and Comprehensive Nursing has offered the course NS 3400 Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing Practicum every summer semester for the third-year nursing students. The course enables the students to integrate knowledge of mental health and psychiatric nursing for providing nursing cares to psychiatric clients based on self-care conceptual framework, establishes therapeutic relationship and communication with psychiatric clients efficiently, acts as leader and co-leader in group activities therapy, cooperates with interdisciplinary team in promoting good mental health and preventing mental problems of individual, and family, and demonstrates self-understanding and insight toward other’s behavior. There have been many learning activities to accomplish these objectives including pre-post conference, case study, therapeutic interaction, group activity therapy, and field trip (FNS 2005). For the summer semester of academic year 2004 (March-May, 2005), the course coordinator set three areas for field trip from the students’ interest including Stress Relaxation Clinic at Somdet Chao Phraya Institute of Psychiatry, Emergency Home of Association for the Promotion of the Status of Women, and Yuwa Prasart Vaitayopratham Hospital and all responsible teachers agreed to apply the student-centered approach for this part of teaching-learning.

Even all responsible teachers believed that the student-centered approach is appropriate in the education reform era. But the research conducted by Chimlek (2001) found that it had many problems and obstacles during the implementation of this teaching-learning style. For example; it was not appropriate for students who lacked inquiry skill, analytic skill, and group working skill. In practical way, it has no evidence of application student-centered approach for field trip activity of nursing education. So the integration of the student-centered approach is needed to examine in order to know both strength and weakness of this approach. In addition, the research results would be used for further development of teaching-learning style in the Faculty of Nursing Science, Assumption University.

**Research Objectives**

This research aimed to examine the integration of student-centered approach for field trip in mental health and psychiatric nursing practicum from the opinion of third year nursing students in eight aspects including; (i) the self-preparation before field trip, (ii) the field trip plan in each area, (iii) the benefit gained from field trip, (iv) the optimum benefit gained from field trip, (v) the role of teachers for field trip, (vi) the strength and weakness of field trip, (vii) the opinion/idea toward field trip, and (viii) the suggestion for next field trip.

**Literature Review**

There were many researchers giving the definition of student-centered learning in various ways for example; Thornberg (1995, cited after Poulou 2005) defined student-centered learning as a discipline that involved the interaction of a team of students that experienced creative learning to be used in the real world. National Center for Research on Teaching Learning (1999) has defined student-centered learning was a learning model that placed the student in the center of the learning process and students were active participants in their learning by using their own strategies that needed intrinsic motivation and individualization. Malender (2002, cited after Poulou 2005) explained that it focused on the approach whenever teacher coached the student toward the development of attitudes, skills, and behaviors as a learner decision makers, and participants with success measured of learner outcomes. Slunt and Giancarlo (2004) explained student-centered learning involved actively the students in learning process rather
than allowed the student to passively gather information from a delivered lecture in the traditional method of instruction.

For this research, the student-centered approach was defined as self-studying which students took responsibility of learning to construct their own knowledge as needed as individual self-studying style with the teachers’ instruction, guidance, supporting, and assisting in some parts as needed and could be measured through the students’ perception.

The concept of student-centered is derived from constructivism, which Alan Shaw explained that this style of learning, students have to construct the body of knowledge themselves not only receive from the teacher as the traditional style. Shaw believed that knowledge could be formed, changed, and developed by learner. In addition, the component of instructing knowledge depends on (i) previous knowledge; (ii) new knowledge; and (iii) intelligence process (ONEC 2002).

Sukkum (2002) divided the principle of student-centered approach into seven aspects as follows:

(i) Students take responsibility for learning, rather than passively receive knowledge.

(ii) Students use resources to construct their knowledge, based on needs; this means students must participate in positively identifying their learning style and what they need to learn.

(iii) Teachers provide students with clear expectations and desired outcomes before lessons begin.

(iv) Students learn how to learn by developing problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and reflective thinking.

(v) Learning is considered in context of differences that account for, and adapt to the various learning styles of students.

(vi) Teachers guide and facilitate the learning process so that students encounter learning opportunities as they need.

(vii) Teachers are responsible for their knowledge of content and of the learning process.

In student-centered approach, the roles of teacher and students include the preparation role, implementation role, and evaluation preparation role as following figure which educator calls CIPPA model (Kaemane 2002).

Fig. 1. Student-centered process.
Working Hypothesis

The third-year nursing students, Faculty of Nursing Science, Assumption University would gain more knowledge and experiences as needed, knew how to seek for knowledge, and realized the advantages of student-centered approach.

Research Methods

Population and Sample

The population of this classroom action research was 44 of third year nursing students who registered in the course of Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing Practicum in summer semester of academic year 2004. The samples were derived by eight of volunteer students from the offered course who were willing to join focus group discussion.

Research Procedure

1. Researcher set meeting among group of teachers who taught this subject which included six of teachers for explaining the concept of student-centered approach and how did they integrate it into the field trip of three areas where were selected by third year nursing students.
2. Teachers integrated the student-centered approach to students by providing basic knowledge of three learning resource areas and being the consultants for them in order to find out further information.
3. Teachers followed the progression of field trip plan created by third year nursing students.

Data Collection

In this research, researcher employed the group interview or focus group discussion method for data collection. The method of focus group discussion consisted of step by step as the following:

1. Prepared open-ended question for group interview which was adapted from literature review and research objectives. There were questions including: a) How did third year nursing students plan about using student-centered as teaching-learning method for field trip in Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing Practicum?; b) Did this field trip go on as their ideas/plans, and how?; c) What did the benefits gain from this style of field trip?; d) What was the greatest benefit of this style of field trip?; e) What were the teachers’ and students’ roles in this style of field trip?; f) How did the students feel to this style of field trip?; and g) How did the students suggest for the field trip of this course in the future?.
2. Prepared material used for group interview including paper, pen, tape recorder, tape, chair and room.
3. Rehearsed group interview method with team.
4. Appointed with samples for group interview.
5. Took two hours for group interview.

Data Analysis

After completing group interview session, researcher wrote field note by listening from tape recorder word by word. To make sure that the data was valid, researcher did triangulation by comparing the field note record with the students’ behaviors observed by teachers during field trip session, read field trip report randomly, and observed their presentation. From the triangulation technique, researcher found that data was accurate.

Researcher used generic method of content analysis by creating taxonomy from the interview statements in field note and did analytic induction as same as used iterative thinking as the technique to analyze data until analyzed data matched with the research objectives.

Research Results

The important research results found that the third year nursing students who registered the course of Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing Practicum planned themselves before going to field trip by setting up group meeting
to nominate leader and co-leader, specified field trip objective, delegated jobs to group member such as coordinated with another person in field trip area, and prepared materials and document for group activity during field trip. Although the students planned in the earlier, they found that on the day of field trip, the plan had to be changed in some parts to fit with the current situation. However, the overall of field trip activities followed their plan which showed by the following statements.

“At first we set meeting to plan what should we do for this field trip? What kind of activity we should prepare for example which activity in Stress Relaxation Clinic is appropriate to learn? So the two representatives of our group make appointment with the psychologist there for pilot study the function of this clinic and then tell to members of the group before going to field trip in this area”.

“After receiving assignment to study the function of Emergency Home, our group prepare the activity we should do for the children there, nominate our leader, co-leader, search information related to this area such as history, and staff that we have to contact. We also prepare the leader of each sub-activity, and the one who have to take the photograph, write field trip report, and present information to the class”.

“We know that the number of children at Emergency Home is 20, so we prepare materials for every activity, gifts, and snacks fit with the number of students. But in the real situation, there are more than 20 of children who join with our activity and some of them are too young to play the game. So we have to solve problem by assigning the older children to take care younger one as the buddy and give all gifts to the staffs to distribute to children later”.

The students stated that the benefits gained from the integration of student-centered approach in the field trip were elaborate knowledge receiving from the three areas of external learning resources that provided caring to the people with mental health and psychiatric problems. The students were satisfied with the additional knowledge because they never learned it from the classroom and any book. Furthermore, the students worked as a team and cooperated with the health care personnel which practiced them for their team working skills, cohesiveness, and had good attitude toward their friends. Not only these benefits gained but also practicing leadership and follower skills as same as know how to suggest others for mental health services. These benefits were showed by the following statements.

“I gain more benefits from this field trip such as additional knowledge that I cannot read from the book or learn from teacher in the class. On the other hand, I learn how to work with my friends and know that nobody can do something alone, we have to help each other”.

“My idea is the same as my friends; first point I obtain more knowledge from the field trip area. Another point, the teacher let the students plan, and think by themselves which make us know how to plan, and be the leader of oneself and others. When I ask for some helps, everyone is willing to help me. So I think we learn how to create the unity and feel good with our friends. In addition, I know more of the place that I can suggest people who have problem of mental health to receive service”.

More benefits the students received as mentioned above were less important comparing with the most benefit which they divided into two dimensions. The first dimension was true knowledge getting from real experiences as they would like to know. They stated that they knew how to seek for knowledge as well. The second dimension was team working experiences with friends, health care personel while teachers had the roles of mentor, consultant, and facilitator which showed by the following statements.

“I think the most important benefit from this field trip is additional knowledge from that field trip area and gain group working skills because we have to help together to accomplish the objective of our field trip”.

“I have had more experiences from field trip from every subject I learned until the fourth year. But this time, teachers empower students to plan for our field trip, manage activity, and do everything we would like to do. 229
I think even it looks different from the past, but I get more knowledge and experiences more than field trip in the past and know how can I find out more knowledge by myself. Teachers just only advice, be the consultant if students cannot solve problems, and facilitate us when we need helps”.

Conclusion

The case study related to the integration of student-centered approach for field trip in Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing Practicum was conducted among third year nursing students which aimed to examine the students’ opinions toward the integration of student-centered approach in this activity of their teaching-learning. From the research results mentioned above, it showed that this style of teaching helped students to develop the method to search for knowledge as teachers taught them for fishing because the roles of teachers were facilitators, consultants, and mentors. Furthermore, students not only gained more elaborated knowledge but also learned to work as a team. However, this approach had weak point which related to inappropriate students’ characteristics such as inactive behavior, could not construct new concept from new gained information, and no potentiality to work as a group as same as the research results reflected by Chimlek (2001).

Reflection and Suggestion

This research was initiated from the teachers who taught Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing Practicum and they would like to know the results of the integration of student-centered approach for field trip in this subject. From research results, researcher had some notices that the integration of student-centered approach would not succeed if the teachers still fixed ideas of the teaching style as in the traditional model. The most important factor effecting on the success of this approach was that teachers have to understand “what does student-centered really mean” and followed this concept effectively. For the implementation of student-centered approach into field trip and other activities for every subject, it is very important for teachers to motivate students to work as the group and pay more attention to seek for new knowledge. From the above benefits gained, researcher would like to suggest that student-centered approach should be implemented in advance in nursing education as a life long learning and the research should be conducted in order to examine the effectiveness of the approach.

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