

Experiences of Students in a Cultural Competence Learning Project in Hong Kong- Themes from Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract : Introduction: There is a rising concern on the educational needs of school guidance teachers, counselors, and sex educators to work effectively with students from multicultural groups, such as racial minorities, gender minorities, sexual minorities, and disability groups etc., and to respect cultural diversities. A specialized training model, the multicultural framework based on contact theory is recognized as necessary training model for professional training programs. Methodology: While the major focus of this project is on improving teaching and learning in teacher training courses within the department of Special Education and Counselling, it specifically aims to enhance the cultural competence of 102 participants enrolled in counseling and sexuality education courses by integrating the following teaching and learning strategies: 1) Panel presentation; 2) Case studies; 3) Experiential learning. Data sources from the participants consisted of the following: (a) questionnaires (MCKAS and ATLG) administered in classes; (b) weekly reflective journals, and c) focus group interviews with panel members. The focus group interviews with panel members were documented. Qualitatively, the weekly reflections were content analyzed. The presentation in this specific conference put focus on themes we found from qualitative content analysis of weekly reflective journals from 102 participants. Findings: Content analysis had found the following preliminary emergent themes: Theme 1) Cultural knowledge and challenges to personal limitation. Students had gained a new perspective that specific cultural knowledge involved unique values and worldview. Awareness of limitation of counsellors is very important after actively acquiring the cultural knowledge. Theme 2 - Observation, engagement and active learning. Through the sharing and case studies, as well as visits to the communities, students recognized that observation and listening to the needs of cultural group members were the essential steps before taking any intervention steps. Theme 3 - Curiosity and desire for further inter-group dialogue. All students expressed their desire, curiosity, and motivation to have further inter-group dialogue in their future work settings. Theme 4: Experience with teaching and learning strategies. Students shared their perspectives on how teaching and learning strategies had facilitated their acquisition of cultural competence. Results of this analysis suggests that diverse teaching and learning strategies based on contact perspective had stimulated their curiosity to re-examine their values and motivated them to acquire cultural knowledge relevant to the cultural groups. Acknowledgment: The teaching and learning project was funded by the Teaching and Development Grant, Hong Kong Institute of Education (Project Number T0142).

Keywords : cultural competence, Chinese teacher students, teaching and learning, contacts

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