Evaluation of teaching and learning Leadership, Management and Teamwork skills through use of class debate.

Jane Dundas, Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing, Kingston University

(In collaboration with Judith Francois and Dr Ann Ooms)
Session Overview

- Context: Leadership, Management, Teamwork (LMT) module challenges
- Principles of action research
- Debate experiences
- Outcomes
The Module challenge

- Taught module at the beginning of 3rd year
- Students reported few experiential LMT learning opportunities in practice
- Students questioned relevance of LMT module prior to qualification
NMC Standards for pre-registration nursing education (2010)

- LMT 4th competency domain: practical applications during debates
  - Recognition of how own values, assumptions, principles affect practice
  - Co-ordinating and delegating
  - Shared decision making
  - Respecting others’ contributions
  - Identify priorities
Starting point

- Large student cohort
- > 300 students from all fields
- How could students be encouraged to practise and model LMT behaviours within the taught sessions?
Action research approach

✧ Focuses on addressing problems in practice
✧ Aim is to improve practice by taking action
✧ It’s about critical reflection in and on actions
Action Research definition

“…. A process of people interacting together, learning with and from one another in order to understand their practices and situations and to take purposeful action to improve them.”

Source: McNiff and Whitehead, 2013, p. 25
Action research spiral of improvement
Rationale
Teaching team reflections

• UKPSF in HE - Good practice to consistently reflect and evaluate teaching methods (HEA,2011)

• + ve prior student evaluation of experiences of use of class debates.

• Embed active learning principles:
  • Students are involved in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing (Bonwell, 2001)
  • Encouraged to reflect *on* and *in* action (Schön 1983)
Constructivism through Discovery learning (Bruner, 1963)

- Learners are encouraged to discover information and interrelationships for themselves
- Allows deeper processing and retention of information
- Increases students’ ability to apply new knowledge to real life situations
- Teachers deploy “scaffolding” approach to support effective discovery: resources, structure, guidance

Evidence base

- Evidence in support of debates in promoting critical thinking, professional ethics and teamwork (see reference list)

- Little research evidence to determine effectiveness of leadership teaching interventions in healthcare (Curtis, Sheeran & de Vries, 2012; West et al, 2015)

- Undergraduate nursing programmes should include experiential learning activities geared towards practising and modelling leadership behaviours (Cummings et al, 2008; )
Aim of the project

- To gain understanding of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of class debates as a teaching strategy in LMT nursing education.
- Information will be used to inform the design of future learning/teaching interventions.
Research question

What are 3rd year nursing students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of class debates as a learning opportunity for development of their LMT competencies?
Sub-questions

- Did students perceive participation in debates a good LMT learning opportunity?
- What did they gain from the experience of debates?
- Does students' participation in teams that are for/against the motion or win/lose argument have an effect on outcomes?
- What are the challenges and benefits of participation in the debates?
- How can the session be improved?
Data collection

- Open questions used to gain qualitative data and to prompt reflection in teams as part of collaborative approach to discovery learning.

- Qualitative vs quantitative:

- Students may resist repeated use of evaluation questionnaires - could also exert an independent negative impact on findings and response rate.
Preparation

- Voluntary attendance and participation in debates
- Information about the debates presented as part of a lecture followed by Q&A session to clarify understanding
- Students given additional written guidance and information about debating processes and intended learning outcomes via Blackboard
Logistics

- 300 students divided into 5 seminar groups of 60 in 5 different classrooms
- 5 members of teaching team facilitating – 1 per room
- Facilitator verbal and written guidance to ensure consistency
- Groups sub-divided into debating teams - for and against.
Debate topics

- This house believes that the NHS should be managed by John Lewis partnership
- This house believes that mothers should be paid to breastfeed
- This house believes that contraceptive advice should be compulsory for ten year olds
Student feedback

- Time allotted for student reflection and written evaluation immediately following debates
- 5 Pre-prepared evaluation questions given to each of the separate debating teams
- Asked to identify if the group won or lost their motion
- 40 teams in total ranging from 4 to 8 individual students in each team
- 192 students signed the register (64% attendance)
Data collection

- Each for or against team asked to work together to discuss their answers to the questions
- Recorded on flip chart paper
- Answers could be written as a group consensus or individually
- All data non-identifiable to individuals or groups
Limitations

- Data collected from groups rather than individuals.
- Group dynamics may influence participants to focus on their similarities rather than to allow expression of individual contributions (Finch & Lewis, 2003).
- Pragmatic decision with collaborators to allow rapid turnaround of data analysis with such a large number of students.
Data analysis

The key analytical stages based on the ‘Framework’ approach:

- Familiarisation
- Identifying a thematic framework
- Indexing
- Charting
- Mapping and interpretation

(Ritchie and Lewis, 1994, p. 178)
Debates as a learning opportunity

40 groups of students participated in the evaluation.

35 groups said that they found the debates a good learning opportunity, no significant association with winning or losing the motion.

“The team lost but we were all winners”
5/40 of the groups did not find debates a good learning opportunity (all lost their motion and were in the same seminar group)

“Not relevant to the module content”

Consider effects of “Groupthink” and possible individual facilitator impact
Learning opportunities

“More engaging than lecturing”
“Good opportunity to practice presentation skills”
“Learnt about topics you wouldn’t normally consider”
“Improved research skills”
“Allowed us to hear different views on controversial issues”
“Made us think about new things we wouldn’t have thought of ”
“Not relevant to module content but it did expand our knowledge”
Challenges posed by debates

Prioritisation and time management:

• Allowing time for preparation
• Other work taking a high priority
• Managing workload
• Meeting up to do the work

Group dynamics

• People talking over each other
• Missing people who didn’t take part
• Getting people to work as a team
• Respecting the strong views of others
Critical thinking

- Enhanced professional discussion skills
- Listening to the opinions of others
- How to defend an argument
- It got us to think outside the box and consider arguments we may not necessarily agree with
- Looking at other areas of the debate ie. Advantages and disadvantages
- Constructing a debate
- Ability to weigh up arguments; considering both sides
- How to display proposals backed up by evidence and knowledge
What did you gain from the debates?

Teamwork
- We worked as a team
- Knowledge and importance of good teamwork
- Everyone got involved
- Learning about myself
- Group interaction
Confidence building

- Gained confidence
- The ability to stand in front of people and confidence to speak publicly
- Improved confidence in public speaking
- Gave other people confidence to talk
Suggestions for improvement

• More explanation of the task’s purpose
• Clearer instruction on how to present an argument
• More time for research and preparation
• Make topics more relevant to the module eg. A debate on leadership styles
• More time for detailed discussion afterwards between all members of the class
• A scoring sheet/system
Reflecting on student’s feedback valuable to develop ideas for improvement

However this preliminary evaluative study has methodological limitations and does not provide conclusive evidence in support of debates as a LMT teaching intervention.
Modify the debate design accordingly

- Improve structured preparation for debates
- More time to be built in for preparation and reflection in and on aspects of LMT
- Include specific focus on LMT development
- Debate motions based on LMT topics
Ongoing research planning

- Modify teaching intervention
- Revise study methodology
- Submit ethics application
- Potential to interview focus groups to gain more detailed qualitative data
- Pre-post intervention testing
Questions


