Transformative learning model and its application to a global master’s program in health and sustainable development

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Background: New methods of learning and teaching are critical to prepare professionals with the knowledge, skills, and values that will empower them to act as change agents to promote human rights, justice, equity, and peace.

Structure/Method/Design: This paper examines existing literature on student-centered learning, cooperative learning, autonomous learning, transformative learning, and competency-based education. The focus is on graduate-level curricula in global health and sustainable development that employ transformative learning theory to deliver competencies. Emphasis is placed on 1) the role of students in transformative learning; 2) the adjustments required of institutions to facilitate the implementation of the transformative learning model; 3) how instructors can create and construct the conditions under which transformative learning occurs; and 4) the key elements needed for the transformation of a student into an ethical leader that promotes justice, equity, and human rights.

Results (Scientific Abstract)/Collaborative Partners (Programmatic Abstract): This paper proposes a model for graduate education based on Mezirow’s definition of transformative learning; that is, the process of using a prior experience and interpretation to construct a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action. An effective implementation of this model begins with establishing core curriculum competencies, and is based on Mezirow’s definition of transformative learning; that is, the process of using a prior experience and interpretation to construct a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action. The concentrated, mentored clinical research training in global health settings provided by the FICRS-F Program has had on the professional choices of a subset of program alumni. Alumni considered the FICRS-F Program very influential on their career choices; scores across all groups ranged from 80 to 86. U.S. fellows reported the strongest influence on all four aspects of their professional development: competitiveness for career advancements or additional training; decisions to accept a position, residency, or fellowship; choice of any posttraining specialty or topic area of focus; and choice of institution(s) for study, work, or training.

Summary/Conclusion: The proposed model combines competency-based education and transformative learning theory to prepare graduates to tackle immediate challenges facing their countries in the areas of global health and sustainable development as well as bring about a world of greater justice, equity, and human rights for all.

Impact of the NIH Fogarty International Clinical Research Program on trainees’ career trajectories: Results from a 2013 impact evaluation

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Background: Between 2004 and 2012, the NIH Fogarty International Clinical Research Scholars and Fellows (FICRS-F) Program offered 1-year mentored clinical research training experiences in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) for doctoral students and postdoctoral professionals in health-related fields from the United States and LMICs. Through June 2012, the program supported 436 scholars (doctoral trainees) and 122 fellows (postdoctoral professionals) in 1-year mentored clinical research training experiences at 61 NIH-funded research sites in 27 countries.

With former scholars and fellows transitioning into the next phases of their careers, we evaluated the impact that the FICRS-F Program has had on the professional choices of a subset of program alumni.

Structure/Method/Design: We used REDCap SurveyTM to administer an electronic questionnaire of 100 FICRS-F alumni. A representative subset of all FICRS-F participants was selected to maximize the response rate. The selection was weighted such that the combination of program and year should have a similar distribution to the entire program. The evaluation included questions on accomplishments, ongoing collaborations, career influences, continuing research, and interest in global health. We used a slider scale (0 = none to 100 = extremely) to measure the influence of the training on four aspects of the trainees’ professional development: competitiveness for career advancements or additional training; decisions to accept a position, residency, or fellowship; choice of any posttraining specialty or topic area of focus; and choice of institution(s) for study, work, or training.

Results (Scientific Abstract)/Collaborative Partners (Programmatic Abstract): Not applicable

Summary/Conclusion: We achieved a response rate of 94%, with inputs from 38 US and 34 international scholars and 15 US and 7 international fellows who participated in the program. Alumni considered the FICRS-F Program very influential on their career choices; scores across all groups ranged from 80 to 86. U.S. fellows reported the strongest influence on all four aspects of their professional development (scores 90-95). For U.S. scholars, the program had less bearing on decisions regarding posttraining specialty/topic area of focus and institution(s) for study, work, or training, with scores of 79 and 74, respectively. These impacts may become more evident in the coming years as scholars complete formal programs and are able to actively determine the directions of their careers. Participants’ responses show a strong, sustained interest in global health research since their training experience with a combined score of 90.

The concentrated, mentored clinical research training in global health settings provided by the FICRS-F Program exerted significant influence on the professional career trajectories of its alumni, especially those who participated as postdoctoral fellows. The FICRS-F program and year should have a similar distribution to the entire program, which would include questions on accomplishments, ongoing collaborations, career influences, continuing research, and interest in global health. We used a slider scale (0 = none to 100 = extremely) to measure the influence of the training on four aspects of the trainees’ professional development: competitiveness for career advancements or additional training; decisions to accept a position, residency, or fellowship; choice of any posttraining specialty or topic area of focus; and choice of institution(s) for study, work, or training.

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