Plan for a SoTL Project

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| **Research Question**  What are you curious about?  What would you like to know about strategies that might hinder and/or help students to learn, in your course?  Do you want to know if an activity, assignment, or teaching strategy “works?”  Do you have a question about how to help your students learn a particular skill?  International study abroad courses have become a popular way for educational institutions to expose students to other cultures, different beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviours, and systems. However, international learning experiences are costly and resource intensive. Although short-term study abroad experiences are frequently cited in the literature as life changing, it is unclear if they meet the criteria for transformational learning. My research question is:  Does transformational learning occur in international short term learning experiences for nursing students? |
| **Identify challenge/outcome related to learning that is related to your question.**  Describe the learning in a way that suggests how you might *measure* it using either qualitative or quantitative methods.  ,International learning opportunities are costly, and not accessible to all students. Furthermore, there can be difficulty ensuring safety, and students can experience culture shock Although these experiences are frequently cited in the literature as life changing, it is unclear if they meet the criteria for transformational learning as identified by Mezirow (2003). Who proposed that learning emerges from personal experience through critical reflection and active appraisal. Experiences allow learners to construct, validate, and re-formulate meaning from an experience to influence future thinking, development, and action.  I want to examine if the cross cultural nursing elective I teach, and which includes experiential learning in Tanzania – meets the definition of transformational learning. |
| **Describe the instructional activity, assignment, or teaching strategy that will promote student learning on the outcome you identified.**  SoTL projects might investigate the impact of a *modification* to an existing strategy or assignment. Describe how the new approach differs from the old approach and why this modification might change student learning on this outcome.  There isn’t a new approach – I have taught a similar course 5 times, and have accompanied students as well to Ghana and Nepal on similar experiential learning activities. The students come home and tell me the opportunity was life changing, they often will do things like get tattoos to remember the experience by, but I have frequently questioned whether the experiences fit the definition of transformational. I want to ascertain if the investment in time and resources for faculty, schools and students was reaching the transformational learning goals promoted by many agencies and academic programs. |
| **Describe the evidence that would persuade an external audience that the new or modified teaching strategy improves student learning on the targeted learning outcome.**  Describe the evidence you would need to collect to answer questions about the impact or value of this teaching strategy. How would you convince others that this approach is better than other approaches? What comparisons should you make? Examine students; skill before and after the assignment? Compare students who complete the learning activity to another group of students – what comparisons would be meaningful?  I would like to interview students at intervals of 6 months post the course. Will ask for ethics approval and will have a neutral third party present the research to the students at the end of our last class and ask for participants. I will interview first within a few weeks of the course end date, then at 6 months, 1 year, 2 years and 3 years. I would also like to analyze reflective journals submitted as part of the course work.  I will also have a research assistant who can remove all student identifiers from the reflections so when I am analyzing them I am blinded to who wrote what. Having said this perhaps someone else should be hired to grade/review the reflections during the course as well so I am blinded to that. I would like to interview the students, but if I am going to be teaching them again in the future this could cause unconscious bias in the interview – so I will need a neutral research assistant to also conduct the interviews |
| **How and where would you publish, present, or disseminate this work?**  I would like to present this work at our St Lawrence College Nursing conference (Synapse) held each spring.  As part of the project I will complete a literature review and could present this as well – or perhaps publish the literature review or results in a SoTL journal = Perhaps:  The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning |

Adapted from: C. J. Stanny, E. M. El-Sheikh, & H-M. Chung (2009) ***Getting Started with a SoTL Project***

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