

EMPOWERMENT TO PROTECT: SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

As a result of the pandemic emergency, decreed in Portugal in March 2020, the need to train professionals from nursing homes institutions in preventive measures for the transmission of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Training activities were planned, appropriate to each institution and target population of the sessions (Introduction to COVID-19, Hand hygiene, Personal protective equipment, Safe working environment and Being a professional). These sessions are co-planned and carried out by the students, with teacher's supervision. The final discussion with trainees is shared between students and teachers, who guide the entire process. Using literature review, the contents were updated and integrated. It's considered guidelines of competent entities and recognized merit, national and international. Scientific and pedagogical guidance is implemented in moments of partnership with students, with development of communication skills inherent to the training process. Learning was transversal to the entire process, with reflection on the lived experience. It is noteworthy that by the student's involvement in concrete social issue, the commitment to the community is developed.

Keywords: Nursing, Health Education, Service Learning, Infection Prevention COVID-19.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Empower to Protect Project has existed at the Católica Nursing Center of the Nursing School of Lisbon, since March 2020, when the first state of emergency was declared.

It was born from the will of teachers and students, based on needs identified in partner institutions with protocol and where our students were conducting their clinical practice.

Training activities were planned, appropriate to each institution and target population of the sessions, including the main subjects: Introduction to COVID-19; Hand hygiene; Personal protective equipment; Safe working environment; and Being a professional. These sessions are co-planned (teachers

and students) and carried out by the students. The final discussion with trainees is shared between students and teachers. Teachers guide the entire process.

Associated with the unique time we live, it was necessary for the training to be virtual (Santos Junior & da Silva Monteiro, 2020).

The term Service-Learning refers to a type of teaching methodology in which a link is built between what is experienced in the community and what is learned in the academy. Thus, there must be a relationship between the experiences in the community and the knowledge acquired at the academic level (Howard, 1998 cited by Kezar & Rhoads 2001).

This type of methodology emphasizes the importance of reflection in action, where students lived experience differ from the knowledge acquired only in the classroom. Therefore, learning is maximized when it becomes active and engaged (ASH & Clayton, 2009).

Through a survey conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities it was possible to understand that most employers seek skills in their employees such as: civic knowledge and skills, intercultural competence, problem-solving skills, teamwork skills, and critical thinking skills. Although these skills transcend academic knowledge, they can be developed and reinforced through Service Learning (Hart Research Associates, 2013).

The Council of Europe's (2016) for democratic culture have created a framework of civic competencies that encompass twenty skills divided into: values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding. These included respect, civility, responsibility, self-efficacy, critical thinking, listening, observation, empathy, providing guidance for the design of Service Learning (Bringle & Clayton, 2021).

The objective is to understand the impact of the "Empowerment to Protect" project on the target population, inserted in the research project of Católica Learning Service.

2. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design is presented, using descriptive analysis of data by frequency distribution. Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire previously sent to the reference person in the institution. With a methodology focused on the active participation of trainees, in last fortnight March 2022, 3 training courses were developed in Nursing Homes, at 2 different institutions in Lisbon, where all of them were provided by 3 students and 1 teacher. Training in Portuguese was provided to nursing homes helpers.

The measurement instrument applied consists of 4 questions ("To what extent do you consider the objectives of the session to have been achieved?"; "Regarding the way in which the session took place, where do you rate your degree of satisfaction?"; "In general, at what level do you place the contributions this session has given you within the scope of your role?"; and "In general, how do you consider your level of participation during this session?"), where the trainee is asked to share his opinion regarding the training he has just attended, on a Likert-type scale from 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum). Then, in an open question, they are asked to highlight the most positive aspects, the ones you least liked and suggestions for future training.

It is important to highlight that the ethical principles associated with the research were considered (Marques-Vieira et al., 2021a).

3. RESULTS

The sample consists in Nursing Homes helpers (n=36), who responded the questionnaires in 3 training sessions: on March, 16 (n=25); on March, 21 (n=5); and on March, 31 (n=6), with two institutions (n=25 and n=11, respectively). The sample is entirely composed of females (n=36).

The questionnaire, which requested the trainee's opinion, was completed at the end of the training, using a Likert-type scale. Regarding question 1 (To what extent do you consider the objectives of the session to have been achieved), we found that 69,5% put themselves in item 5 (n=21) and 30,5% in item 4 (n=15). From the analysis of the answers to question 2 (Regarding how the session took place, where is your level of satisfaction), 69,5% put them in item 5 (n=25), 25% in item 4 (n=9) and 5,5% on item 3 (n=2). Regarding question 3 (In general, at what level do you place the contributions that this session gave you within the scope of your function), 47,2% answered 5 (n=17), 36,1% in item 4 (n=13) and 16,7% ranked 3 (n=6). Finally, the answers to question 4 (In general, how do you consider your level of participation during this session), were the ones that translated a greater subdivision, being 50% attributed to 5 (n=18), 22% to 4 and 3 (n=8), 2,8% to 2 (n=1) and 2,8% who did not respond (n=1).

In the open questions, in the "Refer to the most significant aspects that you had the opportunity to develop during this session", from the answers (n=29), "a good synthesis of the theme emerged" (n=19), "reinforcement of correct hygiene care of the hands" (n=4), "correct use of personal protective equipment" (n=3), "how to correctly use the different masks" (n=2), "safety procedures with the uniform" (n=2), "safety conduct in public transports" (n=2), "use of illustrative videos" (n=2) and "safety procedures in our home" (n=1). In the question "Which aspects did you least like in this session", emerged as results from the answers (n=5), "it was a long training" (n=4) and "it should have been longer" (n=1). Finally, in the question "Give some suggestions that, in your opinion, may contribute to improving future sessions", from the answers (n=10) it was highlighted as answers "to continue the training, with other themes" (n=5), "to be more enjoy the training" (n=3), "be face-to-face" (n=2) and "training on vaccination literacy" (n=1).

4. DISCUSSION

The proximity of academy to the contexts of professional practice and the reflective practice inherent to the development of skills through lived experience (Silva et al., 2009), harmoniously integrate this pilot project with in-service learning principles of social responsibility.

Through the human resources of the partner institutions, the involvement of students and teachers in concrete social issue, develops knowledge regarding the active commitment that must exist between the academy and the community, mediated by ethical principles and social responsibility (Pope Francis, 2015).

With the use of different dynamics conceived between students, teachers, and communities, it was intended to align the development of academic and transversal skills inherent to the student education as a person and as a professional. The impact of in-service learning in the "Empowerment to Protect" project, reveals to be a very positive educational experience.

The impact of student service learning in the "Empowerment to Protect" project has been shown to be an educational experience where students develop transversal skills in the academic, personal and professional scope (Marques-Vieira et al., 2021b). We perceive, through the lived experience, a form of transversal learning throughout the entire process (Silva et al., 2009). We also found that the development of transversal skills in organization, communication, analytical skills, autonomous learning, entrepreneurial spirit, creativity, teamwork, and ethical commitment, is achieved through the involvement in an experiential education (Scannell & Newstrom, 1994). The development of skills is accompanied by teachers in scientific and pedagogical guidance in moments of partnership with students in

which the various skills inherent to the training process are trained (da Silva Góis & de Araújo, 2021). The trainings are carried out by several students, in the presence of teachers with whom the final discussion of each training is shared.

In view of the opinion expressed by the trainees, in which more than 50% refer to maximum satisfaction, we can conclude that our students prepared the sessions very rigorously, having transmitted all the knowledge in an unequivocal way and with great confidence. They show also, at the end of the training, a lot of confidence in the way they clarified all doubts that were raised. Scientific rigor was also certified by the teachers who accompany them and are part of this project.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The impact of our "Empowerment to Protect" project training in the community has been an educational experience where the human resources of partner institutions develop transversal skills in the prevention of infection by SARS-CoV-2. We reinforce that the fact that students are involved in concrete social issue develops their commitment to the community.

The limitations inherent in carrying out this study are related to the sample size and the lack of inferential analysis of the data, which does not allow generalization of the results.

This project may evolve other health issues, according to the needs identified in the community, keeping however the focus - the training for safe practices related to infection control, within the scope of health promotion.

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