Examining Reflective Efforts on Career Goals in Pharmacy Students' E-Portfolios

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Study Purpose
- Evaluate the differences between students' depth of reflection on written essays about their career goals comparing two different classes of the year (P1-P4) pharmacy students
- Comparison of student essays from 2009 and 2010 using a rubric framework of focus, inquiry, and craft
- Collection of baseline data on students' self-reported use of time, resources, and revisions of assignments for the 2010 P1 students

Professional Development Course Requirements
- 9 required courses for P1-P3 students (2 course per academic year)
- Use of e-portfolio system for course assignments (AACU standards)
- 3 required reflective essays per course
- Weekly clinics
- Mandatory attendance
- 2 Student Academic Assistants (SAA) and 10 Advanced Academic Assistants (AAA) (used to provide initial assessment of reflective essays and provide feedback to students)
- 20 faculty mentors (including Dean)

Professional Development Convocation Series

These courses employ a series of seminars to immersse students into the College of Pharmacy and profession of pharmacy. It will focus on professionalism, leadership, development, administrative topics, professional practice issues which influence the specific decision-making, patient care, communication skills and techniques, and career development.

Goals of the Convocation Series

To provide a mechanism by which:
1. Issues of professionalism can be presented and discussed in a manner that is commensurate with the academic level of the student
2. Mandatory administrative topics can be addressed with specific classes at the appropriate time in the academic year
3. Presentations over career options and career decision-making can be addressed at appropriate times in the curriculum
4. Programmatic requirements can be directly tied to coursework, thus providing a mechanism for evaluation and mentoring.

Methods
Take group of students were included in this study. Participants in Group 1 were 157 P1 students enrolled in the Professional Development Convocation Course (PDC) during the 2009 fall semester. Participants in Group 2 were 120 P1 students enrolled in the same PDC course during the 2010 fall semester.

The essay assignment on Career Goals was evaluated in this study. Students were evaluated for depth of reflection using a slightly modified Ward & McColl [2004] Reflection Rubric, with the same ratings: Reflective, Technical, Dialogic, and Transformative. Results from the Ward & McColl [2004] Reflection Rubric highlight for each of the four dimensions for depth of reflection between the two groups were compared using independent samples t-tests.

Feedback was solicited on the assignment, and students were given feedback on their essays as part of course requirements.

Career Goals Reflective Essay Assignment

After listening to the lecture on Career Path Preparation, reflect on your own career goals as a P1 student.

- What were your career goals upon entering the Pharm.D. program?
- How have your career goals changed since then, if at all?
- What prompted any changes to your career goals?
- What information will help you determine the best career path for you?

Depth of Reflection Results

- Trends in reflective dimensions and overall depth of reflection between the two groups were compared using independent samples t-tests.
- Feedback was collected in the second and third years of the professional program to determine if there is a difference as they have learned more about the profession.

Directions for Future Research

- Findings from the study suggest that there would be benefit in continuing to collect data on depth of reflection, especially if correlated with annual or other input assessment of this assignment.
- Determine if there is a relationship between depth of reflection and effect will be beneficial to the researchers as they continue to develop and refine the PDC courses.
- Early implementation and continue assessment of reflective skills to reflect correlated with amount of effect will be beneficial to the researchers as they continue to develop and refine the PDC courses.
- Collecting data each year will allow for assessment as to whether there is any difference in depth of reflection and career goals for students as they progress through the professional sequence.

Acknowledgments

This project was conducted as part of the research apprenticeship requirements for the Pharm.D. program in Higher Education Administration at the University of Texas at Austin. Special thanks to Dr. Patrick Ganes, Department of Educational Administration, and to Dr. Patrick Ganes, College of Pharmacy, for their contributions.