Reviewer’s report

Title: Evaluation of Constructing Care Collaboration - Nurturing Empathy and Peer-to-Peer Learning in Medical Students who participate in Voluntary Structured Service Learning Programmes for Migrant Workers

Version: 0 Date: 22 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Lorraine Mc Ilrath

Reviewer's report:

I greatly enjoyed reading this paper and believe that it is well written and structured. An excellent foundation in terms of the CCC Programme is described. This approach gives the reader a good and strong overview as to the rationale and modus operandi of the service learning engagement with the community.

I have a few questions however, that I feel might greatly enhance the paper.

Firstly, why was a mixed method approach adopted and retained, particularity when only 38 people participated in the quantitative side of the research process? Does this represent a statistically sound set of results? Why did so few (half) not attend the final session? Were there commitment issues? What might have the non-attending students have stated? More reflection here would enhance the paper.

The paper requires a stronger rationale for a mixed methods approach. I feel that justification for quantitative approach is weak given the number of returns and the results could be questioned in terms of their soundness and accuracy. Perhaps it could be stated that a mixed method approach was initiative but due to the low number of quantitative returns that a qualitative approach was then adopted for a number of reasons - perhaps more reflection on the research process, rationale, challenges encountered etc. This would give greater depth to the paper. The research process is never perfect and the reader is interested in hurdles encountered along the way and how these are handled.

The qualitative side I feel is richer, but I feel that the data has not been reported on in a deep and meaningful way.

I think 17 qualitative interviews are a more than adequate number for a qualitative study despite what is stated in the limitations section on the number interviewed - see page 17.

What is FIPSE? Perhaps I missed out on this description.

Also, it is a missed opportunity not to include the student qualitative quotations within the actual paper rather than an add-on as an appendix to illuminate the theme that derived from the data.
This would provide a narrative that feels alive, deep, rich and would help illuminate complexity in terms of themes.

Terms such as students and volunteers are used interchangeably. I suggest omitting the word volunteer and volunteering as this is NOT a volunteer programme as students are using their academic knowledge and attaining credit for the engagement. Perhaps at the outset a programmatic definition of service learning might help and position the student within this realm.

Page 7 lines 15-24 - I am confused as to the method of recruitment perhaps it is because I am not part of the medical field, but I do think greatly clarity could be offered here.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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