Assessment of Graduates' Critical Thinking Abilities as an Intended Learning Outcome of the BSN Program

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BACKGROUND

- Remarkable challenges facing higher education in Saudi Arabia, consequently universities’ programs developments are taking place reflecting the need for development.
- Nursing programs has also giving emphasis on such development by assessment of the learning outcomes as an indicator for quality education.
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the National League for Nursing (NLN) considering Critical Thinking (CT) as curricular learning outcome important to produce competent nurses graduates.
- To prepare competent nurses who engage in complex problem solving and critical thinking, both the curriculum and teaching strategies need to enhance CT.

Aim:

- Assess the nursing graduates’ critical thinking disposition as an intended learning outcome of the BSN program.
- Assess the relationship between the nursing graduates’ critical thinking disposition, their learning preference and the teaching strategies used during the program.

METHODS

Design:

- Descriptive correlational cross-sectional design was utilized. After ethical committee approval, Graduates of the last two academic years (2013-2015) filled in the study questionnaires at the end of the last semester and before the internship.

Study Questionnaires

- California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI), seven subscales, 75 items measured by 6 points Likert scale (1 strongly disagree to 6 strongly agree). The total CCTDI score ranges from 75 to 450. A score of 280 or higher indicates a positive critical thinking disposition, a score of 210 or lower indicates negative critical thinking disposition. A score between 211- 279 indicates ambivalence towards critical thinking.

- Teaching and preferred learning strategies questionnaire. Graduates rated the frequency of use of 12 teaching strategies on a 4 points Likert scale ranging from 4 always utilized to 1 not utilized. Also they rated their preference of each strategy on a 4 points Likert scale ranging from 4 most preferred to 1 not preferred at all.

RESULTS

- Response rate of 85% was obtained. A total of 81 graduates participated in the study.
- The majority of the graduates (72.8%) perceived that the program contributed to their critical thinking skills.
- The mean total CTDS was 290 ± 21.8 with the lowest score of 247 and the highest score was 342.

- The development of critical thinking (CT) has been a focus of nursing educators at every level of education for years. A body of literature supports the study results that indicated the contribution of the nursing education to the development of nursing graduates CTD.
- Some teaching strategies that previously reported to promote critical thinking were used during the program such as clinical conference, demonstration or simulation, mentoring, questioning, case study and problem based learning. However, others such as cooperative learning, project based learning, nursing round, interactive lecture, reflective journal, were not reported to be usually used. This indicating further attention from the educators to the effective strategies that contribute to the critical thinking of nursing graduates.
- In spite of the agreement between students and educators regarding the value of critical thinking, they differ in how they believe it should be taught. The study results showed that the mostly preferred methods reported by students were not the mostly strategies by used educators. Additionally, there was a significant association between the effective and graduate’s preferred methods and the CTDS.

- For nursing graduates to be engage in complex problem solving and critical thinking, educators need to reconsider the teaching strategies used to develop students’ critical thinking as well as considering the students’ individual learning preference.
- Students should not only have a disposition toward critical thinking, they should also possess the willingness to apply it.
- Students should be encouraged to transfer critical thinking knowledge, skills, and dispositions learned in the educational environment to their personal and professional lives.

REFERENCES


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