

Evidence for Learning-Centered Nursing Programs: Putting Students First

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Problem

Faculty are concerned that nursing students develop abilities towards life-long learning. Yet content-heavy curricula common in programs today leave little room to develop these skills. Evidence shows learning centered education can accomplish student learning for the 21st century.

Evidence

A search for education models effective in putting learning and learners first was conducted for 1995 to 2005. Results indicate Post Modern models such as feminist, narrative, constructive, etc., commonly labeled “learning-centered education” show consistent success in developing life long learners.

Strategy

A new pre-licensure baccalaureate nursing program was developed using evidence from learning centered literature. Learner-centered approaches offer an alternative to traditional content-heavy curricula.

Practice Change

The focus of nursing curricula becomes the needs, motivations, and perceptions of learners, and teaching/learning experiences to meet these needs. Graduates have developed higher order thinking skills such as problem solving, clinical decision making, and critical and creative thinking abilities.

Evaluation

Over the past two years a four semester baccalaureate curriculum was developed and implemented. Student outcomes were measured using authentic assessment. First graduates in May, 2006, NCLEX-RN results pending; however, CCNE site visit successfully conducted November 2005, with final results pending April, 2006.

Results

Preliminary results indicate a learning-centered education model has, according to our CCNE site visitor, “the potential to change nursing education as we know it”. During the site visit students expressed that the learning centered teaching/learning methods assists in “thinking on their feet” and to become resourceful in searching for answers to questions or problems that arise.

Recommendations

Nursing faculties should consider restructuring curricula to follow learning centered concepts of focusing less on content and more on developing students as life-long learners.

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