

The student nurse's experience of summative assessment in clinical practice -the findings from a small scale study.

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Introduction

The prescribed standards for undergraduate nurse education demands that pre-registration nursing curricula in the UK today are based on a 50:50 theory: practice split (Nursing & Midwifery Council, 2010).

Clinical experience is at the heart of developing practice skills and the competence required for safe practice. The clinical practice placement has an essential role in the development of practical knowledge and in the application of propositional knowledge. However it is often considered by students and qualified staff that learning in the practice environment is more meaningful than learning in the classroom (Lambert & Glacken, 2005). It is also known from earlier work that there are challenges with the integration of theory to practice from the student's perspective (Melia, 1987, Hunt et al., 2011). Assessment is known to drive classroom learning but little is known about the assessment of practice from the student nurses perspective.

It is the assessment of the learning that occurs in this environment that is complex. Since 2008 there have been many developments to support learning and assessment in practice (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2008). Yet it is also known that there are many deficits identified in the clinical practice setting as a supportive learning environment and in the assessment of practice.

This small scale study was an opportunity to test the methodology: semi structured interviews and document analysis were employed with a view to identifying their appropriateness for the larger scale study in the future.

Aim

The aim of this small scale study was to identify the student nurse's experience of the summative assessment of clinical practice.

Methodology

Intrinsic case study design was used. This alludes to the fact the researcher has a genuine interest in the case with the intent to understand the case as it is the case (in its own right) that is of interest with the opportunity to build theory. Increasingly used to undertake qualitative inquiry, case studies are not a methodological choice but a strategy thus allowing a number of methods to be used (Stake 1995, Yin 2003).

Ethics: Ethical approval was granted through the School of Education.

Data collection

Semi structured interviews were undertaken and recorded. The participants practice assessment document were discussed followed their interview and the relevant pages of these were then photographed and stored on a password protected computer file. Field notes were also taken during the interviews.

References.

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Data analysis

Data was collected from two sources: semi structured interviews and from the practice assessment document. The rationale for this method triangulated approach (Denzin & Lincoln 1989:152) was to enhance credibility. Verbatim transcription of the interviews was completed within 24 hours of the interviews being completed. The recordings were listened to a number of times compared with the field notes for identification of nuances and explanation of pauses, laughter etc. transcribed interviews were returned to the participants for member checking. Content analysis was employed and categories emerged. This was also utilised for the Practice Assessment Documents (PAD)

Findings

The reality of assessment as a measure of learning was identified as 'a means to an end' with little involvement of the student. The PAD's identified the students' roles within the team but not what was learnt or what future learning is required. The function of this small scale study was to test the methodology but nonetheless these findings cannot be discounted and will be used in the main study.

I kind of expect them to spend some time with me, tell me what I have achieved or have not achieved. What I could perhaps take forward tell me what I need to build on but I haven't had this. This isn't because I have nothing to improve on, I know I have. Constructive feedback would be good

"she is confident, always polite

I have been quiet lucky so far only one mentor not good

It was hard but I kept trying, once I worked out that what I could do I started to learn