



ENHANCING NURSING EDUCATION: EMBRACING AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT IN EVALUATING UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS SKILLS: A REFLECTIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Reflective writing is an essential component of learning, allowing students to synthesize theoretical knowledge and practical experience. This journal recounts an educational experience during the Advanced Specialty Practicum: Education at Aga Khan University, Karachi, where the author engaged in an authentic skills-based assessment of pediatric nursing students. The assessment involved evaluating students on clinical skills such as baby bathing and IV medication administration. The experience highlighted the challenges students faced in executing skills efficiently within a structured time frame and emphasized the role of rubrics in objective grading.

The author's initial unfamiliarity with Likert-scale evaluations led to critical self-reflection, improvement through feedback, and a deeper understanding of authentic assessment principles. The guidance of an experienced preceptor played a crucial role in refining evaluation techniques. This reflective process underscored the significance of formative and summative assessments in nursing education, ensuring competency-based learning. Moreover, it reinforced the value of experiential learning as an effective educational strategy. Moving forward, the author aims to integrate these insights into future teaching practices, emphasizing structured evaluation, constructive feedback, and experiential learning to enhance student competency and confidence in clinical settings.

INTRODUCTION

Reflective writing in all educational levels enhance cognitive abilities (Artioli et al., 2021) and broaden intellectual horizons (Baresh, 2022), rendering them captivating and valuable (Skelton, 2005). My current journey of learning directed me to write this reflective journal. Indeed, students engage in reflective writing to synthesize their learning by drawing upon their existing knowledge (Baresh, 2022), engaging in social interactions, contributing to a community (Skelton, 2005), exerting individual effort, and expressing emotional involvement (Artioli et al., 2021). This reflection follows the same circle.

Although, students learn clinical internship skills in undergraduate healthcare curricula (Leijser & Spek, 2021). To make sure certain skills work in clinical practice, they should be reviewed and assessed in light of the placement (Gregersen et al., 2021). Additionally, lack of knowledge in nursing education limits theory-to-practice integration, making nursing principles difficult to learn and apply (Koukourikos et al., 2021). Correspondingly, nursing information taught through simulation improves practical skills and patient safety (Baresh, 2022). Like all students the Pediatrics nursing students can also safely practice clinical skills and assess their theoretical and practical knowledge in simulations (Mahoney et al., 2013). The Advanced Specialty Practicum:

Education at the Aga Khan University Karachi for my MScN taught me about "Authentic Skills Assessment."

Description

Upon reflecting the "Skills Based Assessment" day, with my kind preceptor leading the course of "Peads Health Nursing" observing BScN (Year-III) students' skills of "baby bath" and "IV medication administration" and developing expertise in assessing them was valuable. The first task was to set up the four stations with the appropriate supplies. I observed the IV-medication station by helping the preceptor re-arrange/re-ready the station for

next students' evaluation and managing the used station according to the item's checklist for every new student, was knowledgeable. The students had a tough time during skills to perform all steps efficiently. Students were entering to each station at their own turn having 10 minutes to perform the entire steps of a learned skills. The preceptor formally evaluated the skills by utilizing a written document containing rubric criteria and items. I attempted to emulate her work style. In order to do so, I attempted to evaluate three students based on that specific set of criteria, initially. Subsequently, after the break time, and learning new skills helped me to assess some students according to the proper assessment criteria.

Feelings

There was a sense of accomplishment when students' skills were evaluated after being taught by theory. Developing self-criticism, logic, and anecdotes were needed to justify scoring and assessing students by evaluator (Artioli et al., 2021). Hence, each grade point and level developed practical and critical evaluation skills (Maffucci et al., 2024). Students had to be cautious when executing skills because scores affect final assessment grades. Equipment and supply availability on time must be noticed because if it is overlooked when the station is ready, it could confuse the students, as it undertook when the students failed to properly use the sharp box. It was crucial to note if students adhered to the handwashing technique. It helped me determine which errors must be rectified for evaluation and which could be overlooked. Skill observation at the "IV medication" station with the preceptor provided valuable insight, as one faculty was on each station, assessing the various skills.

Evaluation

The entire day remained hectic but taught me the significance of authentic assessment. The task of reorganizing the utilized stations was executed accurately due to perceptive observational abilities. By evaluating the three students, an attempt was made to

determine how to assign grades utilizing the marking rubric. However, while on break, I made sure my evaluation form was error-free by reviewing the preceptor's comments. She provided me with her evaluation sheet for the same students to review. My preceptor showed me the proper approach to mark according to the rubric and said "an evaluator may give a pupil a passing or failing grade based on her careful observation and authentic assessment" her insights provoked my confidence, in rating the rubric on the Likert scale.

Analysis

Upon further consideration, I acknowledged my inexperience with Likert-scale evaluations. Consequently, I realized what areas needed the most work. Though it left me feeling down, this experience taught me valuable lessons that will help me grade students more fairly in the future. Moreover, I learnt that important notes and annotations in this evaluation record deserve careful attention. I realized the necessity of student evaluation criteria. Hence, "Principles & Methods of Assessment" course refreshes my memory. Reading the "authentic assessment" papers in my last semester course helped me remember the most significant elements, in perspective of authentic assessment. I have found that making it a habit to reflect on prior information and write reflections has been invaluable in maintaining the coherence of my own learning and development. After that, I graded several more students using my preceptor's method. I was astounded by the fresh knowledge I acquired. Finally, I assisted her (my preceptor) with station re-organization and accurate assessments.

CONCLUSION

I would benefit from this life lesson because I had a great time at the skills-based assessment day learning about best practices in education. It represents my class sessions and is notable because I was assessed using the same criteria and rubric as a student.

Action Plan

This experience has provided me with valuable insights into how I intend to assess and appraise my students as a prospective educator, as well as how I might assist my colleagues in doing the same. It exposed my shortcomings in using the Likert scale for grading and also influenced my approach to grading and evaluating students in both formative and summative assessments. Since then, I realized that I needed to examine the record closely in order to find the helpful comments and annotations that were included. The preceptor's demonstration of the correct method was captivating and really enhanced my learning experience. It has taught me an additional lesson. Before undertaking a task, I should first demonstrate it through practical experience, as experiential learning is the most effective way to acquire knowledge (Chan, 2023).

Relevant Theory for Integration

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) is highly relevant to this reflection. The theory outlines a cyclical learning process with four stages:

1) Concrete Experience: The hands-on engagement in evaluating students' clinical skills.

2) Reflective Observation: The author's contemplation on grading challenges and rubric application.

3) Abstract Conceptualization: Learning from feedback and refining assessment skills.

4) Active Experimentation: Implementing the preceptor's insights to enhance evaluation techniques.

Kolb's theory supports the idea that learning is most effective when individuals actively engage in experiences, reflect on them, conceptualize improvements, and apply new knowledge in practice. This aligns with the author's realization that experiential learning strengthens professional growth and assessment accuracy.

Kolb's Four-Stage Learning Cycle in reflective experience

1) Concrete Experience (Direct Participation)

Author's involvement in the Skills-Based Assessment Day was a firsthand learning experience. By actively participated in setting up assessment stations, observing students' performance, and evaluating them based on a structured rubric. This hands-on exposure allowed to experience authentic assessment in real-time, making it more than just a theoretical concept.

2) Reflective Observation (Analysing the Experience)

After observing and assessing students, author reflected on the challenges she faced, such as struggling with skill execution and handling equipment like the sharp box. Author also identified her own learning gap, particularly inexperience with Likert-scale grading, and sought feedback from the preceptor.

3) Abstract Conceptualization (Developing Insights & Theories)

By analyzing the experience and receiving feedback, author connected it to broader concepts in nursing education and assessment methods. She also recalled her coursework on "Principles & Methods of Assessment" and recognized the importance of objective grading, structured rubrics, and constructive feedback. Author understood that authentic assessment ensures competency-based learning in clinical practice.

4) Active Experimentation (Applying What You Learned)

After break time, applied the preceptor's guidance to grade students more accurately. Author made intentional improvements in the evaluation approach, ensuring fairness and accuracy. By the end of the day, not only assisted in re-organizing the stations but also refining the ability to assess students effectively, enhanced your future role as an educator.

CONCLUSION

My journey reflects Kolb's belief that learning is a continuous cycle, where direct experiences lead to reflection, theoretical understanding, and ultimately, practical improvements. This cycle transformed my

evaluation skills and deepened the understanding of authentic assessment in nursing education. Moving forward, I will apply these insights to enhance both in my teaching approach and student competency in clinical settings.

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