

REFERENCES

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CLINICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA IN ASSOCIATE, BACCALAUREATE, MASTER'S, AND CONTINUING EDUCATION NURSING PROGRAMS IN THE SOUTH

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Despite a growing interest in competency-based education for students in programs of higher education throughout the United States, nursing educators have not as yet developed an instrument of proven reliability and validity which measures the clinical competence of students about to graduate.

Nursing literature points out the need for application of clinical evaluation criteria

so that nursing performance can be measured at a level of competence that reflects safe nursing practice. The American Nurses' Association (ANA) Standards of practice outlines safe nursing practice in any setting. Using these standards as a reference, the clinical evaluation criteria were categorized.

Purpose

The three-fold purpose of this research was (1) to determine the degree to which the clinical evaluation criteria used in four types of nursing programs reflected the ANA Standards of Practice; (2) to compare the clinical evaluation criteria used in associate degree (AA), bachelor of science (BS), master of science (MS), and continuing education (CE) programs by the Southern Region Education Board (SREB); and (3) to determine the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the clinical evaluation instrument among members of each program. This includes what degree of objectivity they believed their clinical evaluation instrument to contain.

Method

A stratified random sample of 30 BS programs, 30 MS programs, 30 CE programs, and 60 AA degree programs was drawn from the SREB region.

A total of 129 usable questionnaires were returned from 44 programs, as well as 44 usable clinical evaluation instruments containing 1,796 evaluation criteria.

Results

The 44 clinical evaluation instruments containing 1,796 evaluation criteria showed that 959 criteria reflected ANA standards; 837 criteria could not be categorized according to the ANA standards. The proportionate use of criteria reflecting ANA standards of practice was significantly different among programs, $\chi^2(2) = 13.6$ $p < .01$. Continuing education criteria were not categorized as reflecting or not reflecting the ANA standards.

The BS programs used a significantly higher proportion of criteria reflecting ANA standards, whereas associate degree programs used a significantly greater proportion of criteria not reflecting ANA standards.

The 837 criteria that could not be categorized according to ANA standards were classified by the investigators as organization (2.1%), communication (7.9%), leadership ability (2.2%), group participation (3%),

skills (4%), charting (1.1%) personal characteristics (16.9%), professional behavior (8.0%), and other (1.4%).

Sixty percent of the respondents were satisfied or partially satisfied with their clinical evaluation criteria. Forty percent were dissatisfied or partially dissatisfied, and only 35% believed their clinical evaluation criteria were not objective. This is an interesting finding because almost half of the identified clinical criteria evaluated personal characteristics rather than clinical competencies. The clinical criteria used by these programs appears to have far less objectivity than the faculty perceived.

Recommendations

More research is needed to determine if the clinical evaluation criteria used in AA, BS, MS, and CE programs measure a level of competence reflecting safe nursing practice.