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ABSTRACT

Background of the Study: The design of pre-registration education programs and the evaluation of their success in India are based on the regulations and standards set by Indian Nursing Council. While there had been a number of publications in recent years on characteristics of competence and measurement issues, assessment methods and assessment of clinical performance, very few studies were done on the educational preparation and competency assessment of student nurses. This study was done with the aim to develop and test the effectiveness of Competency based Performance Assessment Approach in the Evaluation of Core Competencies of Nursing Students.

Methods: A Quasi experimental research approach was used with a Pretest and Posttest non equivalent Control group design. The study settings were selected colleges of Nursing in Bangalore, Kolar and Tumkur. The target population for the study is 4th year Basic BSc Nursing students and their educators. Convenient sampling was used to identify the colleges for the study and the students of 4th year BSc Nursing students who fit the inclusion criteria were included in the study. 186 student participants and 40 educators completed the posttest in each group. The study comprised of 2 phases: In the first phase, Core competency framework was developed after an extensive literature
review and Modified Delphi technique. Based on the core competency framework, 6 assessment tools were developed: Clinical Competency rating scale assessed by the educator in clinical area, Self Evaluation, peer evaluation, RN evaluation, client evaluation and Case Vignettes. A facilitator manual was developed to train the educators on the core competency framework, core competency building strategies, performance assessment and the tools to assess competencies. In the second phase, the data was collected using Observation and self report by the assessors (Educator, Students, peers, clients, RN) and paper pencil test. The intervention comprised of orientation and training on Competency based Performance Assessment approach for educators and the students implemented for a period of 6 months. The feedback of the intervention and opinions on the factors affecting acquisition of core competencies was obtained using Likert type scales from the experimental group using self report. All data were analyzed using SPSS 16.0 for Windows. Significance for all analyses was set at p<0.05 level.

**Results:** The students in the experimental group showed significant improvement in the competency levels after intervention as compared to the control group. There was significant difference between the pretest and posttest competency levels of students in experimental group (t-148.115, df 185 p <.001). ANCOVA showed significant F (1,371) ratio of 18112.87 at p <.001 thereby indicating significant difference in post adjusted total mean values between experimental group and control group. Most of the students and all of the educators were fully satisfied with the CBPA approach. The factors favorable to acquisition of core competences were adequate orientation, learning opportunities and factors unfavorable were high workload and scarcity of resources.
**Interpretation:** CBPA approach was found to be effective in improving the competency levels of students.

**Conclusion:** Substantive support exists that clinical competence is an essential attribute in professional nursing including nursing students. This research demonstrated the value of an educational intervention in improving the competency level of nursing students.

**Keywords:** Competency based performance assessment approach; B.Sc Nursing students; nurse educators.