ABSTRACT
The rapidly changing health care environment requires nurses with strong critical thinking and analytical skills as well as competence to provide professional and compassionate care. In order to meet this societal demand, during student period itself they must learn to be skilled thinkers, know how to learn, and know how to use what they know in novel situations. This will be possible with the awareness of nursing students about their own cognitive activities while learning which is known as metacognition. The metacognitive training using concept mapping may enable them in carrying out this higher level function by providing a basis for enhanced critical thinking and clinical decision-making throughout nursing education and nursing practice.

Aim of the study
The present study was aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of concept mapping as a metacognitive intervention in teaching selected pediatric nursing topics on academic performance and critical thinking skills among third year BSc. Nursing students at selected Government nursing colleges of Kerala. It was further aimed to identify the perceptions of students regarding use of concept mapping as a teaching learning method in pediatric nursing course and their improvement in concept mapping skill from the beginning to the end of intervention period.

Methods
The present study adopted a quantitative evaluative approach and a quasi experimental, pre test post test control group design. Third year B.Sc. Nursing students studying in four Government nursing colleges of Kerala (n=240) were conveniently selected and randomly assigned into experimental and control group (experimental group (n=130), control group (n=110). The Conceptual framework of the study was based on David Ausubel's assimilation theory of learning and the tools used were socio personal data sheet, achievement test, Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric, Critical Thinking Self Assessment Scale, perception assessment scale and concept mapping scoring criteria. Analysis of data were done using frequencies, percentages, mean, standard deviation, Pearson Chi Square, independent t-test, Karl Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient, ANOVA, Repeated Measure ANOVA and post hoc comparisons.

Results
The findings of the study showed that students undergone metacognitive intervention using concept mapping out performed those in the traditional didactic lecture group on academic performance (22.8(+2.07) vs. 19.51(+2.89), p<0.01) and general critical thinking skills (218.71(+27.96) vs. 200.55 (+18.85), p<0.01). The level of subject specific critical thinking was also significantly higher in the experimental group.

In addition to the above findings, the experimental group expressed a very high positive perception regarding concept mapping as a teaching learning method in pediatric nursing course. Further, a significant difference was observed in the total and component wise concept map scores of all four topics with least scores for the first drawn map and more for subsequent ones. (F–value 63.62 (P value<0.001). This indicated that with continuous practice students will become proficient in concept mapping.
Conclusion
Concept mapping as a metacognitive intervention resulted in higher academic performance and critical thinking skill compared to the traditional lecture method of teaching in pediatric nursing topics and the students perceived this innovative teaching learning strategy as favourable.

Key words- constructivism, metacognitive interventions, concept mapping, academic performance, critical thinking, nursing students, perception towards learning experience.