A Review of the Reflective Narratives of Students enrolled in a Diploma Nursing Program: a descriptive study

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The "Questions"

1. What are the issues that students in a 3-year nursing diploma program reflect on?
2. Does a relationship exist between the amount of clinical practice and the issues that nursing students reflect on?
3. What level of thinking do students use when reflecting on their practice?
4. Does a relationship exist between the amount of clinical practice and the level of thinking that students use when reflecting on their practice?

Results

Question 1
Eight common themes emerged:
• Ability to:
  • provide basic nursing care
  • communicate with patients
  • manage time efficiently
• Discussion of an emotional response
• Description of a critical incident
• Continuous learning within the profession
• Professionalism during clinical experience
• Importance of collaboration among colleagues

Question 2
Difference between Semester One and Five groups: the perspective that the reflection is viewed.
• Semester One group: focus on the clinical issues as it relates to their own abilities.
• Semester Five group: explore clinical issues from a more global, holistic lens.

Question 3
Levels of thinking engaged by Semester One and Semester Five Student Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Thinking</th>
<th>Semester One (n=20)</th>
<th>Semester Five (n=13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level I: Data gathering</td>
<td>11 (55 %)</td>
<td>5 (35.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level II: Data analysis</td>
<td>6 (30 %)</td>
<td>3 (21.4 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level III: Conclusion drawing</td>
<td>3 (15 %)</td>
<td>5 (35.7 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = number of clinical journals

Question 4
• Semester One group: 55 % are at Level I and 15 % at Level III thinking.
• Semester Five group: 35.7 % at Level I and III; 57.1 % are at higher levels of thinking (II and III).

Literature states

• Reflection is a cognitive process rooted in high-level thinking (analysis, synthesis and evaluation).
• Reflection (through journal writing) is a constructivist learning strategy.
• A strong link exists between critical thinking and reflection.


Methods

• Qualitative, descriptive study
• n= 19 students
  • 11-Semester One
  • 8-Semester Five
• Instruments:
  • Survey questionnaire
  • Post-clinical journals
  • Coding schema
• Post-clinical journals:
  • Content analysis
  • Coded using schema

Loiselle, Profetto-McGrath, Polit and Beck, (2007); Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009)

Implications for Practice

Nurse educators are cognizant of the benefits of reflection but they need to emphasize how reflective assignments will help nursing students develop their critical thinking.

Nurse educators should scaffold reflective learning activities to ensure that students progress to higher-level thinking.