



ASSESSMENT; AN OVERVIEW TO NURSING*

Nursing

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ABSTRACT

Teaching and assessing are two dimensions within the same learning process which are rather challenging and demanding. Neither can assessing stand alone nor can teaching be considered comprehensive if assessment has not taken place. In all educational developments, one of the most difficult question is about assessment. This article attempts to give an overview of assessing nursing students. It is observation of discrete behavior of an individual in formal setting. It is a process of making judgment. When value system is placed on judgment made about a group of or discrete events is termed as evaluation. In educational scenario evaluation have important role in judging student progress to know up to what extent student have achieved the desired set goal.

KEYWORDS

Judgement, Dimensions, Comprehensive, Scenario

INTRODUCTION:

During the last decades, nursing education, like many other fields of nursing, has undergone fundamental changes in order to meet the needs of rapidly changing society.

Changing Trends In Nursing Education

- From teacher oriented - Learner oriented
- From passive teaching - Active learning
- From subject based - Problem solving
- From transmission of knowledge- Development of skill and attitude
- From testing knowledge -Assessment of competence

The word " ASSESS" comes from the latin verb "ASSIDERE" meaning "to sit with" . It is the process of determining whether predetermined objectives has been achieved. Usually the terminology is used for the teacher assessing the taught. This implies, it is something teachers do "with" and "for" students. It includes gathering, interpreting, recording, and using information about a students response to an educational task.¹

Evaluation

There is a subtle difference between evaluation and assessment. Evaluation is a process of student assessment of his teacher/ program. e.g. daily evaluation and feedback provided at CNE/workshop program.

In nursing, assessment of a trainee is of particular importance in the sense,

- Allowing a trainee to pass who should be failed may pose a threat to society.
- Conversely, failing a trainee who should be passed wastes the trainees time and money by requiring him/her to repeat some of the training and may deprive society of a competent care provider.

Three Main Goals Of Assessment

- To optimize the capabilities of all learners by providing motivation and directions for future learning
- To provide a basis for choosing students for advanced training.
- To protect the society by identifying incompetent students.²

TWO TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is done by a teacher by continuously monitoring a students progress in a non threatening supportive environment. It involves regular descriptive feedback chance for the student to reflect on his/her performance, take advice and improve upon it. It is conducted at periodic intervals and covers specific small areas of the syllabus. It improves the quality of the course itself. It provides information on what an individual student needs.

- To practise
- To have re-taught
- To learn next

It is widely and empirically argued that formative assessment has the

greatest impact on learning and achievement of a student. A few common tools used in formative assessment include assignments, projects, quiz, debate and orals.³

Summative Assessment

Generally taken by students at the end of a unit or semester to demonstrate the "sun" of what they have or have not learned. It is the most traditional way of assessing a students work. It presents a judgment about how well or poorly (pass/fail) a student met a given goal, often in relation to performance of peers.⁴

Summative Assessment And Feed Back

- Summative assessment may not provide sufficient feedback.
- Students tend to study which they expect to be tested on. Hence summative assessment influences learning even in absence of feedback.

The Garden Analogy

In assessing the growth of plants:

Summative assessment is a process of simply measuring the plants. It might be interesting to compare and analyze measurements but, in themselves, these do not affect the growth of the plants.

Formative assessment is the equivalent of feeding and watering the plants appropriate to their needs directly affecting their growth.

It has to be remembered that both summative and formative assessment are interconnected. They seldom stand alone in construction or effect. A distinction should be made between assessments that are suitable only for formative use and those that have sufficient psychometric strength for summative use. The present curricular model in most Indian universities gives weightage to summative assessment, which tests the performance of a student on a given day and does not test the individual in depths.⁵

METHODS/ TOOLS OF ASSESSMENT

The various methods are

Written examination : This includes

- Essay questions / Modified essay questions
- Short answers / Very short answers
- Multiple choice questions

Practical Examination

- Structured direct observation
- Rating scales
- Objective structured practical exam (OSPE)

Oral Examination

Multi-source 360° assessments

This includes assessment by peers, patients, self and portfolios. Assessment by peers and patients can provide insight into students work habits, capacity for team work and interpersonal sensitivity.

Portfolio - It is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the students efforts, progress and achievement in one or more areas. It provides a comprehensive view of a student performance. It includes

log books, assignments, video recordings, recording of non scholastic abilities, peer assessment, patient survey, self assessment, projects, literature searches etc. It encourages a student to develop abilities needed to become an independent self directed learner. Portfolios are commonly used in formative assessment.⁶

Clinical Simulation - A Few Types

- Mannequin- Part task trainer/Complex task trainers
- Standardized patients - They are actors who are trained to portray patients. They are used in OSCEs. The standardized patient has a checklist of rating scales to evaluate the students performance
- Incognito standardized patients- unannounced standardized patients can be presented incognito in actual clinical settings. Such patients are being used in assessment of higher level trainees.

Domain - wise Matrix of assessment methods

The assessment of the three domains provides a more holistic picture of students performance or students abilities upon specific competencies.

The important characters of an assessment tool are:

Relevance - whether the tool is appropriate in the context of the needs of society or system. e.g. Case Discussion : Diabetic Ketoacidosis - Relevance of Urine Acetone test⁷

- Validity - Does the tool really measure what is intended to?
- Reliability - Consistency/ Repeatability of the tool

If a student were to take the same test on two occasions would he get the same results or if the test was given to students would they all get the same result?



A Schematic Representation Of Reliability & Validity

Objectivity -Two or more examiners agree on expected result. Will the student get similar scores if assessed by more than one examiner on the same tool independently?⁴

Feasibility- Can it be implemented in practice?

Selection Of An Assessment Tool

While choosing a tool, consider

- Domain to be tested
- Syllabus
- Number of students
- Types of questions
- Mark distribution
- Relevance, feasibility & reliability

Factors Inhibiting Assessment

- A tendency for teachers to assess quantity rather than quality of learning. Greater attention given to marking and grading, much of it tending to lower self esteem of students, rather than providing advice for improvement¹
- A strong emphasis on comparing students with each other, which demoralizes the less successful learners.

CONCLUSION

Nursing education aims at an allround development of a student and not merely imparting knowledge to him. It is therefore necessary that teachers should be equipped not only with subject matter(content) and dynamic methods of teaching but also with objectives and appropriate testing devices which will assess a students ability. All methods of assessment have strengths and intrinsic flaws. Use of multiple observations and several different assessment methods over time can partially compensate for flaws in any one method.

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