

The Implementation of a Competency-Oriented Transcultural Nursing Education Program

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Abstract. Guided by the theory and model of competency, extensive research and investigation about the job requirements for nurses from abroad working directly with patients of a different cultural background was performed. Based on the job requirements, in conjunction with guidance from nursing specialists as well as suggestions from teaching committees a competency-oriented transcultural nursing student education program was developed. The program was implemented and has yielded promising learning outcomes. The results of this study should provide a solid foundation for the future cultivation of nursing personnel and lead to improved patient care.

1. Introduction

With the rapid expansion of many Chinese metropolises, many domestic general hospitals have set up clinics, wards, and health centers specifically for international patients; a variety of foreign-funded, or joint-venture hospitals have also been built. Unfortunately qualified nursing personnel equipped with a background knowledge of globalization, English communication skills as well as nursing experiences, are lacking and in high demand.

Therefore, nursing educators must be able to address this changing trend while cultivating highly qualified, nursing personnel. Utilizing the theory and model of competency, an extensive investigation was performed that examined nursing personnel job requirements, consulted with nursing specialists, and experts from teaching committees. From this investigation a competency-oriented nursing personnel training program was devised and implemented. Since its application, this training program received satisfactory results, though there are practical considerations that must be considered further.

The concept of competency, first conceived by Dr. David C. McClelland of Harvard University, refers to “an underlying characteristic of a person which results in effective and/or superior performance of a job” [1, 2]. Competencies are the key characteristics an employee possesses that help them achieve the best performance at work [3]. Though a variety of competency models have been devised to depict needed characteristics the ice-berg model is most commonly used [4]. As its name implies, a competency model is composed of a few visible components (Threshold Competencies), like knowledge and skill, and a larger number of behavioral components (Differentiating Competencies) like attitude, traits, thinking styles, self-image, organizational fit, etc. [1]

Despite there being a considerable amount of research into nursing competencies, there is relatively little information regarding nursing competencies. Studies conducted thus far are primarily composed of self-reported surveys about nursing and descriptions of experiences obtained during practice. It has been reported that professionalism is the most important factor affecting the nursing competency [5]. However, in addition to knowledge, ability, and aptitude about nursing care, other capacities and skills are also critical for working with foreign patients, including the cross-cultural communication ability, computer skills, oral and written daily/medical English communication skills, medical literature search, and the ability to read some basic nursing care text books and related references in English [6]. However, to the best of our knowledge, there has been no discernable research into the training and education of nursing personnel. Thus this

study was conducted which sought to identify threshold and differential competencies required for a successful nursing career. From this standpoint a competency-oriented training program was developed in order to cultivate nursing personnel and to meet the increasing workforce need. The newly developed program was implemented and has demonstrated encouraging outcomes

2. Identification of Competencies Required for Nursing

Panels of national and foreign nursing education experts and nursing specialists from United Family Healthcare (Shanghai, China) and Sir Run Run Shaw Hospital, an affiliate of the Zhejiang University Medical College (HangZhou, China) were interviewed to identify the competencies required of nursing personnel. Based on these interviews, the identified competencies were analyzed and can be summarized as:

1.1 Threshold competencies consist of the basic knowledge and skills required in order to perform transcultural nursing. Based on the features of transcultural nursing, threshold competencies pertain to the ability to provide holistic nursing to expatriates and having basic transcultural communication skills.

1.2 Differentiating competencies consists of professional insight, individual spirit, the ability to work as a part of a team, stress management and critical thinking skills, self-learning skills, as well as excellent communication skills.

3. Construction of a Competency-Oriented Nursing Education Program

Once the required competencies were identified, it was evident that nurses caring for international patients need a strong grasp of basic nursing skills, abilities, and knowledge, as well as strong communication skills. Cultural diversity in conjunction with differences in behavior, social norms, and expectations of practicing nurses needs to be taken into account when training qualified nurses to function within the international standards of best practice [7]. From the competency theoretical model and the guidance from experts in the field, a nursing personnel training program was devised. The main objective of this program is to train qualified personnel with the competencies necessary to successfully work with international patients. The mission of the program, expectation upon graduation, program curriculum, and measurement tools are as follows:

3.1 Program Mission

The mission of our training program is to train outstanding nursing professionals with cultural competencies for nursing practices. At the conclusion of this program, the nurses should be able to demonstrate basic theory, and skills required to provide excellent care, communicate successfully with domestic and international patients-written and oral-in their care. They should also be able to demonstrate an awareness of, and be adaptable in, their responses towards diverse cultural encounters. The nursing personnel should be able to adapt to internationalization of nursing while demonstrating strong core competencies for nursing, interpersonal communication skills, and sustainable development of their professional skills.

3.2 Expectation for Graduation

A successful graduate of the nursing training program should be able to significant knowledge, ability, and aptitude upon graduation [8]. Further, in keeping with the mission of this program, the successful graduate will not only be a highly qualified nurse, but will have the necessary competencies in order to work directly with foreign patients in a variety of medical care facilities and health care centers. After 3 years of training all students will have completed required courses credits and should be able to demonstrate technical and professional skills, oral/written English communication, computer skills, and other competencies required for working directly with transcultural patients.

3.3 Development of Curricula for Nursing Training Program

The newly developed curriculum was focused on attainment of cultural competencies through a “platform plus modules” cumulative educational process. Further, general moral education and public attributes curricula develops the students’ values and morality. The work-related attributes education platform builds a solid foundation for developing students’ professional skills required for taking the licensing tests. This specialized curriculum will include nursing personnel, International Standards for Professional Nurses (ISPN) curricula, basic medical English, etc., and was designed to improve the students’ core competency as a nurse. The work-related attributes enhancement curricula and other elective courses encourage the students continually improve their skills and knowledge to enhance the quality of care they provide. Elective courses include public attributes courses, specialized nursing courses, and enhancement courses (Table 1). The previously mentioned classroom learning will be supplemented by extensive work-related learning, which include a social practices program, clinical observations, pre-practicum training, on-the-job training, clinical practicum, and rotations (Table 2). The time arrangement of the curriculum was described in Table 3.

3.4 Evaluation

3.4.1 Curricula Measurement

The application and content of tests play a pivotal role in guiding the development of related learning outcomes [9]. Current testing methods emphasize mastery and utilization of both knowledge and skills which are easily quantified and assessed. By doing this some competencies such as environmental adaptability, internal driving force, interpersonal communication skills, self-development, etc., are neglected as they are more difficult to address [10]. To cultivate the competencies of the transcultural nursing professional, the commonly used assessment method focused on end-of program examination needs to be more amended to include the learning process evaluation.

Moreover, a training program is measured by an end-of-program examination thus an evaluation of the learning process will be implemented to assess the differential competencies. In our newly developed training program, the evaluation of teaching/learning effectiveness was fulfilled using a quality-focused comprehensive aptitude evaluation system, which incorporated both end-of-program examinations (exit exam.) and end-of-courses examinations, with an emphasis on learning process evaluation. For each course, the evaluation consists of both learning process and end-of-course examinations. Emphasis should be put on the learning process evaluation, which takes into account of professional attitude, communication skills, team work abilities, etc.

3.4.2 Comprehensive Measurement

At the conclusion of the program student achievement was assessed based on multiple outcomes including learning process evaluation and exit examinations. The learning process measures were used to evaluate the students’ performance during their clinical practicum with each teacher giving a score for each rotation period and a final score composed of the average of all scores. The process evaluation contributed 20% of the final outcome assessment and the National Nurse Practitioner Qualification Exam (entry-level)-consisting of fundamentals of nursing (40%), internal medical knowledge (20%), surgical nursing (20%) and English skills (20%)-contributed the remaining 80% of the assessment.

4. Implementation of Nursing Student Education Program

4.1 A Cooperative Education Model

During the implementation of the training program, a cooperative education model was applied based on recommendation from nursing care specialists and teaching guidance committees. In addition, multiple medical institutions were consulted for their opinions about nursing personnel training and evaluation. Academic and industrial experts, as well as hospital management, participated in the programs development and design, curricula arrangement and outcome

evaluation and gradually the cooperative education model became well-acknowledged. The curricula design places the impetus on professional courses, with substantial considerations on language courses and other supplementary courses as well [11]. Moreover, collaborating institutions collectively developed new courses such as “scenario-based comprehensive simulation for international nursing” and “transcultural nursing”, and actively participated in the teaching process. This co-operative model, combining classroom-based education with practical work experience, helped students to succeed in the school-to-work transition, service learning, and experiential learning initiatives.

4.2 The Curricula Arrangement

The curricula arrangement was based on the competencies required for nursing practice and aimed to cultivate highly qualified nursing personnel. Experiences from other countries proved valuable in designing the curricula and made it possible to incorporate advanced educational concepts in the present curricula design. High quality teaching resources, concepts, and content were introduced into the professional core courses. For example, the original English version of “Fundamentals of Nursing” was included in our curricula along with the national Medical English Test System (METS), and the International Standards for Professional Nurses were used in conjunction with dual-language teaching. The final goal was to develop an international curricula utilizing the newly designed “Scenario-based comprehensive simulation for international nursing” to prepare students for transcultural nursing practice, to promote the efficient communication with foreign patients, and to improve the communication skills.

4.3 Multimedia Transformation

A wealth of pedagogical strategies and teaching aids for academic and in-service settings were applied including practice and theory based learning, scenario simulation, internet resources, and discussions among other methods. Teaching aids included micro lessons, micro videos, and interactive multimedia materials; use of social networks such as microblog, WeChat, and QQ platforms was also encouraged to develop learning, cultivate time management, and literature search skills. These pedagogical strategies and teaching aids not only helped the students to master basic skills and knowledge, but also improved their overall quality.

4.4 Practical Process

Students were encouraged to participate in student led organizations as well as a variety of social activities, to acquaint themselves with the nursing field. During these processes, students developed their professionalism while improving their competencies and career development ability. The students were encouraged to increase their participation in social activities involving foreign communities, foreign medical institutions and foreign schools. Additionally, students were required to design their own projects, requiring them to write an investigative reports or thesis under a teacher’s mentorship.

5. Learning Outcomes

Students were enthusiastic and showed great initiative during the implementation of the competency-oriented nursing personnel training program. It is believed that of the flexible teaching models and methods as well as the extensive collaboration between a research institution and area hospitals, which provided optimal training environments for the students, significantly contributed to the students’ response. During the implementation of the program, the research team was continuously seeking ways of improving the curriculum and evaluating the process in order to improve the students’ competencies and personal qualities among other things.

With the development and implantation of the competency-oriented nursing personnel training program, the encouraging outcome of the program gradually became apparent. To date, collaborations have been established with multiple institutes in Taiwan establishing an agreement of mutual recognition for education credits between collaborating sites. The frequent interaction and

communication between students from different cultures not only broadened their horizons but also increased their knowledge. Currently, researchers are actively seeking to establish collaborations with the United States, United Kingdom and other developed countries, reaching preliminary cooperation intention with several institutes. Speaking to the programs efficacy, enrolled students scored significantly higher than other students on the College English Test Level 4 and Level 6. Further, many students have outperformed when in competition. For example, one student won the second place award in the National English Competition for College Students (NCECC) , another won the 2nd place award in National College English Writing Competition (Zhejiang Division), and four students won the 2nd place Team Award and 10 3rd place awards in the National Nursing Skills Competition. Moreover, many students have been spoken of favorably by employers, hospital staff and patients.

6. Summary

Due to rapid globalization and increased international exchanges, there is increasing demand for highly qualified nursing personnel. Revising and improving nursing education to develop competency in future nursing practices is necessary. In the present study, the theory of competency, in conjunction with a thorough analysis of competencies required for nursing, was used to develop a competency-oriented nursing training program. The mission of this program is to equip nurses with communication skills and practical work experience so that they may provide high-quality nursing care for patients from different culture backgrounds [11]. This program improved the curricula arrangement and the evaluation system. Enrolled students have thus far demonstrated an outstanding level of performance, indicating the success of the program. The preliminary success of this newly-developed training program has provided the foundation for further development of nursing education.

7. Acknowledgments

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