Implementation of self and peer assessment in simulation: future directions for nurse education

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Introduction

• Assessment under its many guises is under scrutiny, with many proposals that higher education needs to create more opportunities for reform.
• There is sufficient evidence to suggest a shift is needed in relation to assessment.
• Simulation is purported to be a move in the right direction.
• However, there is controversy as to how simulation can be effectively used as a basis for assessment.
• This paper attempts to detail how the use of simulation was enhanced by the inclusion of self and peer assessment, and capstone in a 3rd year nursing module.
Simulation of clinical practice

• Simulation is able to address care skills deficits in nursing students (Nickles, 2011).
• Warland (2011) simulation as a means to promote nursing students’ learning of work organisation and management skills.
• Hope et al., (2011) simulation can enhance the acquisition of clinical skills in preparation for practice.
• Buckley and Gordon (2011) provide some evidence that simulation is effective in enabling nurses’ to recognise and respond to clinical emergencies.
• Walsh (2011) supply various ways how simulation may be implemented
• Baxter et al. (2009) acknowledged the wealth of literature around nurses’ experiences of simulation.
• McCullum (2007) joined the debate that is currently in favour of using simulation education in adult nursing.
• Ironside (2004) concluded that the implementation of simulation is about how nurse educators can make a module more compelling and engaging for both lecturers and the students.
• There are clear indications that simulation has a role in nurse education, an opinion supported by McCaughey and Traynor (2010).
Assessment

• Lambert and Lines (2000) stated there is a need for a form of assessment capable of empowering students.

• A marked improvement in assessment is needed and is the focus of Higher Education literature. For example:
  – The QAA (2007),
  – National Student Survey (Knight, 2002),
  – Race (2003, p.275) considers that ‘….it is broken’.

• Rust et al. (2005) students should be actively engaged with every stage of the assessment process in order to truly understand the requirements of the process, the criteria and standards being applied, and subsequently produce better work.

• One way to inspire and enthusiastically involve students in assessment is self and peer assessment, which can be employed in simulation to help with assessment reform.

• Some insight into the role self- and peer-assessment in simulation might play as an aid to learning can be derived from examining briefly the two dominant traditions currently explaining human learning and development:
  – The socio-cultural theory based on the writings primarily of Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1986)
  – The cognitive development tradition rooted in the writings of Piaget (1962).
Self-assessment

- Self-assessment can enable students to ‘own’ their own learning and make the decision whether to pass or fail their own performance.
- Stobart (2008) refers to this as ‘self-regulated’ learning monitoring work against high standards and taking personal responsibility to improve it.
- Piaget focuses on individual learning, whereby humans are born able to learn.
- Piaget refers to this style of learning as the cognitive developmental tradition.
- Crucial to this style of learning are the connections learner makes between what is to be learned and existing experience.
- It is this kind of self-assessment that is at the heart of professional nursing practice.
- In this way the student self-assessment can be more valuable when the evidence to be assessed is intrinsically personal in nature, such as in skills situations, where it can be argued that only the student really knows how well they have performed.
Peer assessment

- Peer-assessment is quite different, in that, peers undertake student’s assessment e.g. students are making assessment decisions on other students’ work.
- Cox and Harper (2000) highlights that peer-assessment can be used to assess performance of others’ practical work or performance.
- Students may mark each other’s work using given criteria from lecturers or device their own.
- Peer assessment does not necessarily involve students in passing or failing their colleagues, but for providing feedback, which can help students with their own self-assessment and reflection.
- Peer assessment is a way in which learning can be ‘grounded’ in the social environment in which it is learned, with the learner interacting with others and then ‘internalising’ that, which has been learnt.
- Humans construct their world through interaction and collaboration with others (Mercer, 2008).
- What they learn is to an important extent, shaped by others as well as by themselves.
- Nurses join with others, whether teachers, fellow-nurses, other members of multi-disciplinary teams or patients in which they participate, to form learning communities.
- Thus what they learn is, to an important extent, shaped by others as well as by themselves.
- There is a danger that peer-assessment could be excluded from the discourse of assessment by too much focus on formal traditional assessments in nurse education, and insufficient emphasis given to crystallising and transmitting a variety of assessments.
Self and peer assessment

- Self- and peer-assessment is a powerful form of assessment that is not ‘done to’ others, but requires the student to be engaged and involved.
- This focuses the shifting role of students from a passive receiver of information into an active participant, and so breaking the pattern of passive learning.
- The active student involvement advocated by self- and peer-assessment cultivates a deeper cognitive approach to learning and consequently professional skills development.
- The use of student self and peer assessment is to strive to prepare students for the professional work environment they will encounter post-graduation. Self- and peer- assessment can provide a much better environment for practising duties of a mentor, coach and/or facilitator.
- There is an element of employability in relation to students being able to assess quality not only in themselves but in others, and this has implications for the development of future practitioners as mentors and assessors.
- The combination of simulation and self- and peer-assessment is to provide an environment for students to learn and practice with limited consequences, immediate feedback and evaluation of their role.
Where to start

• Creative and innovative development of new forms of assessment advocated in the literature and stressed by the National Student Survey inspired the joining of simulation with self and peer assessment.
Implementing simulation

• The role of the facilitator is crucial:
  – In engaging drama students to act as patients,
  – Setting guidelines, communicating these to lecturers and students,
  – Outlining the process and explaining the benefits that can be drawn from students taking part in assessing each other’s work.

• Preparing staff, students and actors
The use of video
(to enhance the self and peer assessment process)

- To enhance the self and peer assessment process the student simulation with self and peer assessment was videoed.
- These are shown back to the students the following week.
- There is an initial self and peer assessment process that takes place on the day, then a week later the students are shown back their performance to see if they want to change their opinion or modify their assessment of themselves and each other.
Observations and feedback

• Generally, and for a variety of professional and personal reasons, students found it difficult initially to assess a peer, but with practice these challenges became more manageable and students often understood what assessment and feedback meant by approaching it ‘from the inside’.

• Lecturer observations of the self- and peer-assessment process:
  – Students generally tick the boxes giving positive feedback to themselves and their peers, but tend to give better and more useful written feedback. Comments such as ‘…..both of us need to work quicker and remember to call for help immediately’, ‘….act quicker in assessment’, ‘Could improve knowledge…….’, ‘Build on skills to improve…..’.

• Student evaluations are positive:
  – They enjoyed the session and want to have more sessions
  – Involving drama students was a good experience, and students appreciated their contribution
  – Learning took place
  – Students stated and I quote: ‘it relates to practice’, and that the process seems to be integrating theory into practice for students ‘Oh that is what you mean’, ‘I understand it now’, the students appear to be experiencing ‘penny dropping moments’, helping them learn and recognise these moments

• Drama student feedback:
  – Good experience to act as a patient, commended the students on their performance

• Lecturer comments:
  – Excited by the activity, enjoyed it very much involved in learning rather than teaching, appreciated simulation with actors – areas to improve move it forward
• **Capstone**
  
  – Capstone is the integration of a body of relatively fragmented knowledge and learning into a unified whole (Durel, 1993).
  
  – The contemporary role of capstone assessment is to assist students with connecting areas of learning about nursing together. For example:
    
    • How all areas of learning can impact on one patient e.g. cultural, biological, pathophysiological, pharmacological, microbiological, skills development, managerial, ethical, emotional, professional, and research, and these are all in the curriculum.
    
    • Yet, these knowledge types and learning about them are delivered in a disjointed way, mainly because nursing education is situated in a modular system, whereby, the nursing course is equal to the sum of its modules and learning outcomes (or parts).
    
  – Capstone can be used to further align simulation and self- and peer-assessment and so valuing what students learn outside of set modular learning outcomes.

• **Capstone across departments and faculties**
  
  – There is potential to utilise capstone simulation with self- and peer-assessment across departments / faculties:
    
    • Nursing students self- and peer-assessing each other, and peer assess drama students e.g. nursing students giving their perceived feedback to drama students on their acting talents as a patient.
    
    • At the same time drama students self and peer assessing each other, and peer assessing student nurses e.g. the drama student giving their perceived feedback to nursing students on their nursing skills as a caring, compassionate knowledgeable nurse.
    
  – Cross Departmental/Faculty simulation, capstone and self and peer assessment can be transferable into a number of health and non-health care professions simulation.
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• There is development of student led simulation whereby the students are involved in deciding the case scenarios drawn from their own real life clinical practice experience, which can be expressed and converted into case studies and form the basis for simulation.

• In addition, moving forward also involves students setting the marking criteria and devising their own standards for success.

“The secret in education lies in respecting the student.”
Conclusion

• There is no doubt that simulation is valuable to student nurses.
• Self- and peer-assessment has a particularly important role to play in nurse education.
• Students have a chance to monitor and assess their own and others’ work to help them improve their performance.
• Connecting differing modular knowledge and learning together and applying this to the context of nursing practice cannot be left to chance.
• The main point here is that simulation, self- and peer-assessment and capstone makes a unique contribution to the development of student learning via an assessment, which cannot be achieved in any other way.
References

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