

Project-Based Learning and Evidence Based Nursing as Tools for Developing Students' Integrative Critical Thinking Skills: Content Analysis of Final Students' Projects

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Abstract : Background: As a teaching method, project-based learning is strongly linked to developing students' critical thinking skills. It combines creative independent thinking, team work, and disciplinary subject-field integration. In the 'Introduction to Nursing Research Methods' course (year 3, Generic Track), project based learning is used to teach the topic of 'Evidence-Based Nursing'. This topic examines a clinical care issue encountered by students in the field. At the end of their project, students present proposals for managing the said issue. Proposals are the product of independent integrative thinking integrating a wide range of factors influencing the issue's management. Method: Papers by 27 groups of students (165 students) were content analyzed to identify which themes emerged from the students' recommendations for managing the clinical issue. Findings: Five main themes emerged—current management approach; adapting procedures in line with current recent research recommendations; training for change (veteran nursing staff, beginner students, patients, significant others); analysis of 'economic benefit vs. patient benefit'; multidisciplinary team engagement in implementing change in practice. Two surprising themes also emerged: advertising and marketing using new technologies, which reflects how the new generation thinks. Summary and Recommendations: Among the main challenges in nursing education is training nursing graduates to think independently, integratively, and critically. Combining PBL with classical teaching methods stimulates students cognitively while opening new vistas with implications on all levels of the profession: management, research, education, and practice. Advanced students can successfully grasp and interpret the current state of clinical practice. They are competent and open to leading change and able to consider the diverse factors and interconnections that characterize the nurse's work.

Keywords : evidence based nursing, critical thinking skills, project based learning, students education

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