

Working in partnership with pre-registration student nurses

The development of a practice Learning and Skills record as a tool to enhance learning and in the practice placement setting.

Anita Flynn and Cathy Griffiths

Edge Hill University, flynna@edgehill.ac.uk and griffic@edgehill.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

The last few years have seen unprecedented changes within the NHS through a shift in the priorities going some way towards righting the balance and putting patients in the forefront of the health and social care agenda (Department of Health, 2008). Competencies are the essential building blocks that shape nursing in all clinical practice settings (NMC, 2010). To facilitate learning students are exposed to diverse teaching and learning methods that nurture the critical thinking, analytical and higher order skills. This includes: Practice learning; Clinical simulation; Patient stories and first hand experiences of care; Case studies and problem based scenarios; Tutor led tutorials; Lead lectures by experts in the field. The use of enquiry based learning approaches aim to capture a complex problem or question through the development of simulated or real life case studies or scenario. Nonetheless, there is still the need for students to develop a wide range of practice learning skills in practice required by all registered nurses, regardless of their field. This view is strengthened by recent concerns that nurses have skills deficits (Francis, 2013; Ford, 2010). In addition, the demands on acute placements and reconfiguration of services could mean student nurses have difficulties to know which skills to observe and practice in order to become a confident, able, competent practitioner. Yet the considerable developments in the delivery of health and social care services will require a skilled practitioner to ensure competence, patient safety and comfort.

As student nurses progress they acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding in both their own field and also the alternative fields of practice. However knowing which skills to observe and practice under supervision can be daunting to a student nurse. Thus the need to develop a practice Learning and Skills record, which could be used as a tool to enhance learning in the practice placement setting, was recognized. This tool was developed in partnership with our third year pre-registration nursing students, their input which included piloting, feedback and adaptations enhanced the development and implementation of the tool.

KEYWORDS

Working in partnership, Development of a supportive learning tool, improving student success.

Why? Public Debate & Concerns

Twenty first century nursing faces many challenges. An ageing population, advances in medical knowledge, treatments and technology all add to greater public expectations. In addition to this recent enquiries Winterbourne (2012) Francis (2013) have reported concerns on abuse, neglect, lack of care dignity and respect, furthermore the increase in number of drug errors and lack of skills being reported in the press (NPSA 2009, Ford 2010), suggests scrutiny now has turned to nurse training asking the question. *'Are student nurses at the point of leaving university suitably trained in knowledge and clinical skills to meet the needs of public demands'* Before the introduction of project 2000 (Making a difference 1999) nurse education was delivered by Schools of Nursing, often attached to teaching hospitals situated in hospital grounds. The introduction to University and academia in nursing is often brings with it strong views both for and against. In efforts to alleviate these concerns nursing and other health related professions have increasingly moved to include simulation in order to assist students in developing essential skills for nursing (Kant and Cooper 2009). However once students are out in the clinical practice it was recognized that student needed guidance to identify appropriate skills. *'You don't know what you don't know'*. Children's Nurse Student

THE PROCESS

A decision was made to engage with our students in year three. This group were chosen because they had already voiced an opinions within different forums, that (something) was needed to help them whilst out in practice. Benner (1984) asks in Nurse Education a largely cognitive process inclusive, of lectures and supervised practice or could it be much deeper? Here Benner is talking about the perceived expert being the experienced nurse. For us the experts were our student nurses. It would be their expertise that would shape what was needed. We asked students what they thought should be included and their thought around the format. . All the students identified common generic and field specific skills required to deliver safe care. This feedback enabled us to develop the first draft of the practice tool.

Pilot

Thirty six third year nursing students from across the four fields of nursing participated in the pilot and evaluation of the tool. During their placement the students were asked to use the practice learning and skills booklet daily. We asked students to comment on the identified skills within the booklet, ease of use including layout /order of skills, size, font and presentation. During their time in practice, the mentors were also asked for their opinions and thoughts, from a mentor's perspective. Minimal feedback was received from mentors but it did include:

'Excellent this tool has really been helpful for me to direct, target and monitor my student's skills development whilst here on placement'
Learning Disabilities Mentor

'Please can you review the signatures where mentors' sign'
Children's Nurse Mentor

Implementation

On completion of the students practice placement students were invited to a focus group and their feedback was gathered. Changes were then made and the final template was agreed. A period of consultation to introduce and gain consensus in relation to the tool followed. Staff were informed via team meetings and other Faculty groups. Following agreement the tool was introduced and then distributed to all pre-registration nursing groups from September 2012 (x 4 groups).

Evaluation

Early indications, via student staff consultative forums and contact with directors of nursing, are very positive. Student comments include:

'Really like it' Mental Health Nursing Student

'Why didn't we get this sooner?' Nursing and Social Work Student

'I didn't know there were so many skills' Adult Nursing Student

'It's really helpful on your alternative field' Learning Disabilities Nursing Student

'I really like it but could you put an index page in' Children' Nursing Student

Practice Partners' comments include;

'Just what we needed' Director of Nursing

'It will help us feel reassured' Director of Nursing

Formal evaluation, including feedback from student groups will take place April 2015.

Conclusion

The development of this tool has shown how working in partnership with our student nurses enhanced the development and implementation of the learning tool. Early

engagement, sign up, pilot and feedback focus group with students enabled the development of a learning tool which supports student nurses practice learning. The tool, supports the students individual developmental needs by providing a framework for the development of the whole range of skills necessary to care for all patients/clients' regardless of their field of nursing.

Next steps

Evaluation and feedback from our students (12 months' time)

Develop into online resource tools

Discuss with other professional groups (midwives, ODP etc.)

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