

Use of Blogging in a Preceptorship Course

Facilitation of knowledge and meaning construction can be challenging in nursing preceptorship courses due to the logistics of student placements and variety of clinical times. Although post-conferences have long been the strategy used to provide for knowledge and meaning construction, these often are not manageable in preceptorship courses. To provide for narrative experience sharing and knowledge construction, blogging was employed as an innovative teaching strategy in a preceptorship course offered during the last semester of an associate degree nursing program. The use of blogging was expected to provide an avenue for facilitated meaning construction, self-reflection, and social support (Kerawalla, Minocha, Kirkup, & Conole, 2009).

Teaching Strategy

The pedagogical choice of using a blog was based in social constructivist theory, which supports role formation and is based on adult learning principles. Because role transition to professional practice is a key element of the preceptorship experience, blogging fit well with the educational theory and needs of the preceptorship course. A series of reflective questions were created for the students to address each week related to their clinical experience. These questions focused on areas of professional

roles and assumptions in practice, such as, “What is the vision of yourself as a professional nurse?” or “What influences your thinking?”

Method

The blog was created using the Google® sites application attached to the students’ university e-mail account. The blog was private, with only the enrolled students and the instructor having access. The costs were negligible because the university provided access to Google sites. Each question had its own page on the blog where the students could add personal reflections, read those of their classmates, and post comments. The students were required to view two of their classmate’s blog entries each week and post comments that either shared an experience or initiated further reflection. Faculty responded to student blog entries weekly in an effort to facilitate further knowledge construction. A reflection rubric was developed that assessed four areas: use of the blog, linking of course concepts, personal reflection, and the quality and engagement of writing in blog postings.

Conclusion

Qualitative analysis of student blog entries by the author indicated that blogging was an effective strategy for knowledge and meaning construction, as well as for providing a venue for student con-

nectedness in the preceptorship course. Student blog entries and comments indicated that the blog provided a tool for initiation of further discussion, narrative storytelling, and personal and professional reflection. The blog as a means of instruction was relatively easy for faculty to create and use and was of little cost in terms of time and money. The introduction of this teaching strategy has implications for nursing education because students are placed in a variety of clinical sites and may not be able to participate in traditional strategies for reflection and meaning construction, such as the post-conference. Further implications for implementation of this strategy and research consist of studies of meaning construction related to blogging versus discussion board use, as well as the integration of blogging as an effective replacement to, or adjunctive teaching strategy for, clinical course postconferences.

Reference

Kerawalla, L., Minocha, S., Kirkup, G., & Conole, G. (2009). An empirically grounded framework to guide blogging in higher education. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 25*, 31-42.

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