Succeeding on the Canadian NCLEX-RN: Incorporating experiential learning approaches in the education of internationally educated nurses

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IENs Success on NCLEX

- IENs often encounter barriers in meeting entry-to-practice requirements and in obtaining full licensure to practice

- First time pass rates on NCLEX IENs have been much lower than for their US-educated counterparts

- 2015- pass rates were 30.91% vs. 89.79%

- 2014- pass rates were 28.88% vs. 84.93%

- 2013- pass rates were 30.61% vs. 85.19%

IENs in Ontario

In Ontario, nursing is the third largest body with internationally trained members, yet IENs face challenges in obtaining the credential recognition required to practice in Canada

- These challenges have been exacerbated by recent changes in CNO regulations and federal immigration, which have close off a number of immigration channels used by IENs to access the profession
    - The IEN Competency Assessment Program (IENCAP) introduced in 2013
    - There are limited spaces and programs available to prepare IENs for these exams
- These recent changes, in concert with IENs' low first-pass rates on the NCLEX-RN, present a potential crisis for nurse educators in Canada

What does this mean?

- These measures emphasize the significance of investigating how to better prepare candidates for this exam

Experiential Education Approaches

- Content of the NCLEX-RN is based on and measured using the cognitive domain adopted from Bloom's taxonomy

- Nursing practice requires application of higher order cognitive skills and complex thought processes

- Educators are required to adequately prepare students to use problem-solving and critical thinking skills to address the hierarchical steps in the cognitive domain

- The application and integration of technology is imperative in nursing education

  - One form of technology that aligns with the format of NCLEX-RN questions is the use of clickers

Research Question

Will the application of education experiential approaches enhance NCLEX-RN scores of IENs?

Methodology

- The research comprised a purposive sample of ten participants in their first term of the IEN program at a local university in Ontario who
    - Wrote a pre and post NCLEX-RN style mock exam
    - Participated in a total of six clinical case scenarios, each followed by a brief questionnaire
        - The nursing-care case scenarios focused on six different systems (respiratory, cardiovascular, peripheral vascular, abdominal, neurologic, and endocrine)
        - Each scenario was followed by ten questions that were answered using clickers
- A paired t test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the application of both clinical-case scenarios and clickers on participants' score

Data Analysis

The scores of the pre and post mock exams were collected and analyzed using paired sample t test

The results of the paired sample t test

Table 2. Results of the Paired Sample *t* Test

Student	Pre score	Post score	Difference
1	54	60	+4
2	60	60	0
3	52	50	-2
4	50	56	+6
5	56	60	+4
6	54	62	+8
7	60	62	+2
8	58	60	+2
9	60	60	0
10	60	62	+2
Mean	56.40	59.20	2.6

Table 3. Pretest and Posttest Differences in Mean Scores and SD and SE(d)

Value	Pre score	Post score
Mean	56.4	59.2
SD	3.75	3.68
SEM	1.19	1.16

Note. t (2.8062), a two-tailed p value equals .0205

Results

- The low scores on the post mock NCLEX-RN demonstrate that IENs are prepared for neither the content nor the question format of the NCLEX-RN which raises concerns regarding the exam's impact on educators and nursing programs at large

Findings

- The lack of significant change to the pre and post mock-exam scores indicates a need to expand the research to examine the ability of other EE approaches to engage both students and faculty

- Application of clinical-case scenarios followed by Clickers allowed students to compare their responses to those of the other members of the class and clarify material and stimulate class discussion

- As both the content and format of the NCLEX-RN differ from that of the CRNE, the manner in which faculty has taught and delivered content in the past is an area that requires close attention
    - Imperative to educate the educator on how these challenges can best be addressed in the classroom in order to foster student success
    - This has great implications for student and faculty alike

Recommendations

Further research is needed to augment the findings from this research

1. Explore how results of the NCLEX-RN influence patient-care outcomes
2. Investigate the application of other experiential education approaches; in particular, conduct research within other courses in the nursing curriculum
3. Explore the challenges associated with the implementation of CAT into Canadian nursing programs
4. Compare first-time pass rates of Canadian candidates to those of US candidates
5. Conduct more pre and post studies to further explore the application of CAT in the Canadian context.
6. Research how critical thinking, developed through the use of other experiential-education methods such as flipped-classroom and simulation-based approaches, impacts NCLEX-RN scores
7. Explore the NCLEX-RN scores of novice nurses from different geographical and educational backgrounds
8. Integrate the PearsonVUE Alternative Item Format Online Tutorial (which gives students the opportunity to practice completing alternative item format questions)into classroom practice and explore students' pre and post scores on mock NCLEX-RN exams.

Conclusion

- Findings suggest a need for further discussion in the academic literature regarding how to better prepare IENs and other nursing students

- The study has advanced the understanding of both the challenges associated with the NCLEX-RN within the Canadian context and the ways that may support or enhance success rates among IENs and other Canadian nursing

- Need to explore more methods of teaching and learning pertaining to content delivery and application

- Further research—including similar studies that incorporate samples that are larger or that include participants from a wider range of undergraduate nursing programs—is needed in this area

Questions