HERDSA showcase abstract

The project evaluated an innovative assessment tool that was developed to provide evidence that students were developing science-informed competence for nursing. Measuring and assessing competence in nursing education is a current world-wide concern, with few solutions offered (Anderson, 2008). At Waikato Institute of Technology, the prescription of Nursing Council of New Zealand (NCNZ) nursing competencies into the science modules of the Bachelor of Nursing curriculum commenced in 2009. Examination of the alignment of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment revealed that existing methods of assessment did not effectively assess all aspects of competence.

This research investigated what tools could be used to assess evidence of the development of all aspects of science-informed competence in nursing education, and developed a new assessment tool. The tool was evaluated in terms of its construct, concurrent and consequential validity through a variety of data collection methods.

Findings indicated that the new assessment tool enabled assessment of all aspects of competence, including the contribution of student attitudes, values and abilities. It was also effective in providing students with opportunities to make links between science learning and nursing practice. Questionnaire and focus group results indicated that most students had some understanding of the purpose of the assessment tool and understood the practical test as linking to a 'nursing perspective'. However, the students' immediate response to the assessment was negative, due to their experience of having limited time during the assessment. Future changes to the assessment tool are more likely to be based on students' pedagogical preferences (Boud, 2007).