ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: Use of Concept Maps as a Guide to Critical Thinking

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Concept mapping has been used as an approved and effective strategy in nursing education, especially at the undergraduate nursing level. This technique aims to guide students to understand the relationships between complex ideas in a visual format and to help students organize data in constructing their care plans for patients. The purpose of this study will be to evaluate the use of concepts maps as a teaching technique and a method to evaluate the progression of clinical judgment and critical thinking skills in undergraduate nursing students in a second-level psychiatric nursing course using case study scenarios. This is a replication of the Wilgis and McConnell (2008) study. Benner’s Novice to Expert theory (1984) will serve as the framework for this study. The sample will consist of thirty-six students enrolled in a 2-year associate degree nursing program, which will be approved by the institutional research review board of the participating academic program and Ball State University IRB committee. This study will use a quasi-experimental design to evaluate students’ concept mapping skills over time. Findings of this study will identify the value of concept mapping as an effective teaching method, a tool for promoting students’ clinical judgment skills, and as a method to evaluate students' progression of critical thinking.