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Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 15 (2011) 2963–2966

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**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

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WCES-2011

## Evaluation of teaching and learning course in the nursing baccalaureate curriculum in one University Teaching Hospital in Karachi, Pakistan

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### Abstract

The Generic BSC Nursing four years degree program is a great achievement of Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC). It was developed in collaboration with HEC (Higher Education Commission). There is an unprecedented shortage of nurse educators in the country. The course entitled NU361: Teaching and Learning: Principles and Practices, forms the foundation for educating students about teaching theory, principles and practices. There is discussion at the PNC level that a one year teacher training program for nurses will be established. However, till this program comes into existence this is the only course offering for potential nurse educators. The teaching learning course will be described as one medium to educate a cadre of nurse educators in the country. This paper will describe the existing HEC/PNC course for NU 361: Teaching and Learning: Principles and Practices as it presents itself in the curriculum. Changes were made based on the prevailing nurse educator situation in Pakistan. Course content was added to reflect current trends in nursing education. This paper will highlight how the given course in the national curriculum was reviewed for curriculum alignment, strengths and limitations. In addition, a new teaching pedagogy of moodle was introduced in the course. It is envisioned that this course will enable student nurses' to utilize appropriate teaching learning strategies in their future settings.

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*Keyword:* Teaching pedagogy, E-learning, curriculum innovation, curriculum evaluation, nursing, baccalaureate nursing education

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### 1. Introduction

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) in 2006 heralded a new era for nursing in Pakistan (Shaikh, 2006). For the first time a baccalaureate nursing curriculum was issued by HEC/PNC. This raised the level of nurse preparation from diploma nursing to baccalaureate nursing (BScN). Subsequently, there was a substantial increase in the breadth and depth of the nursing curriculum. Furthermore, there was consistency in the curriculum delivery across the nation. The second strength of the new curriculum is that the curriculum responded to the burden of diseases in Pakistan as well as global health issues (Dias, Ajani, & Mithani, 2010). According to one of the established national public sector university there are 88 school of nursing which

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offer basic nursing programs leading to a diploma in nursing. Of these only five colleges of Nursing are offering BScN degree program ([www.duhs.edu.pk](http://www.duhs.edu.pk)). There exists an unprecedented shortage of nurse educators in Pakistan. Dias, in an exclusive interview to News, a widely read Pakistani newspaper pointed out the dire need for a human resource development program to meet the shortage of nurse trainers (Baloch, 2009).

## **2. Snapshot of Health Care System Pakistan**

In terms of health, Pakistan lags behind other developing countries (Ghaffar, Mazher & Salman, 2000). The situation of human resource in health care system of Pakistan is very deplorable (National Health Policy, 2009). The national policy on health (2009) also reveals that Pakistan is in urgent need of a revised curriculum. Pakistan requires competent health care providers including nurse educators in order to meet the health care demands of the nation. The current ratio cited by WHO stands at one Nurse for every 30000 population. Therefore, capacity building for nurse educators is high on the priority agenda. To upgrade the nursing curriculum HEC in collaboration with PNC in 2006 induct for the first time a new national curriculum which is a generic curriculum leading to a BScN degree (Dias, Ajani, & Mithani, 2010). A new curriculum brings new challenges. The biggest challenge was shortage of nursing faculty to deliver the HEC/PNC curriculum.

## **3. Innovation**

This paper describes how one university school of nursing responded to the dynamic and versatile state of nursing education in the country. The challenge of meeting the shortage of nurse educators was addressed through an arduous but rewarding process by redesigning one course in the baccalaureate curriculum to develop a cadre of nurse educators in the country. This measure was recommended in the interim period until a nurse educator program or course was developed by PNC. A systematic plan was devised and presented to PNC and HEC in the summer of 2010 at a curriculum evaluation meeting in which there were stakeholders from HEC, PNC and other schools of nursing in Pakistan which were offering the baccalaureate curriculum. The short term goal was to introduce new curricula content in consultation with PNC and to introduce moodle as an e-learning pedagogy. The long term goal was to develop potential nurse educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to be successful in their teaching practice. Our recommendations were warmly welcomed by all stakeholders.

## **4. The Process**

According to Azila, Rogayah & Zabidi-Hussain (2006) curricula innovations must meet future health needs of society. They maintain that curricula planning usually begin with a prescriptive model. As the plan is implemented it becomes descriptive as curriculum implementers recognize both internal and external factors that affect outcomes. Such was the case with the implementation of the HEC/PNC curriculum. For the purpose of this paper we will limit our discussion to the course NU 361: Teaching and Learning: Principles and Practices which is offered in Year two of the academic program.

The course was developed on the premise that teaching and learning is a lifelong process. The course aimed to teach the basic concepts of adult learning in order to better understand one's individual learning process and strategies to facilitate the learning of others in various health care settings. In addition, learning mainly occurred through activities and participation in class and through e-learning activities.

Traditionally, according to the HEC/PNC curriculum baccalaureate nursing students received teaching content focused in the areas of reflective writing, stages in learning, well being and the physical environment, learning styles and the learning cycle, learning theories, characteristics of adult learners, health education and health promotion and needs assessment and lesson plan.

In order to prepare the potential nurse educators the following content was added in consultation with PNC and other nursing institutions. This was done after the faculty conducted a rigorous curriculum alignment exercise (Santhanam, 2002). To enrich the course the content added included curriculum planning and evaluation, teaching and learning methodologies with a renewed emphasis on e-learning. In addition, program planning, feedback and evaluation, and planning for accreditation and program evaluation were added to broaden the knowledge base of the students and thereby preparing them for their future role of nurse educators.

#### *4.1 Teaching Pedagogy*

New curriculums goes hand in hand with a supportive learning environment (Caliskan & Tabançali, 2009) For the development of the nursing profession computer literacy and e-learning was a mandated part of the HEC/PNC curriculum (Dias, Ajani, & Mithani, 2010) .Given this premise the faculty embraced a hybrid design to teach this course. Using the blended learning approach a mix of didactic classroom teaching and e-learning through moodle was used (Alonso, López & Manrique, 2005). Creating a conducive learning environment both in class and through e-learning has its roots in adult learning (Teeley, 2007). Students received computer training as part of their year 1 courses. Technology rich materials were developed. Self directed learning was encouraged. The students were encouraged to explore the internet further to enhance their learning and add pertinent material to enhance the course and the learning of their classmates. This e-learning strategy enabled an effective use of students' time to both content and online assessment. It also allowed for active learning through discussion and dialogue with other students and becoming comfortable with the use of technology. Simultaneously students learnt respect for time, flexibility and diversity.

#### *4.2 Assessment*

As potential faculty they would be required to conduct assessments for their students. Therefore, it was imperative that they be introduced to a variety of assessments. The purpose was to familiarize them with the principles associated with different assessments. Assessments were done both in the classroom and on clinical and through integration with other courses.

Assessments were in the area of reflective logs and an end of the course project based on utilization of a health promotion model. This project was undertaken in an area of their own choice either in a community or clinical setting. During the course students were given an introduction to health promotion models and theories. Based on this information students choose a health promotion model and went through the steps of need assessment, prioritizing aims and objectives, identifying relevant resources, planning and delivering the health education and finally evaluating the outcomes. At every stage of the project students reflected on the learning that took place through their active involvement and self directed learning methodologies.

### **5. Challenges and Weakness**

Challenges and weaknesses were intertwined. Thoughtful efforts must be given to develop linkages among nursing institutions and PNC to ensure that curriculum delivery takes place as it is envisioned. It was felt that there is a hesitancy to use technology within nursing. In addition, faculty faced the challenge of e-learning as knowledge and skills were limited in this area. To strengthen this course in the baccalaureate nursing curriculum, we strongly recommended that alignment of this course needs to be changed to Year 3 instead of Year 2. Many concepts like developmental stages and Piaget's theory in connection with learning theory needed to be taught to the students before taking them through teaching learning course. Moreover, we felt it very challenging to teach complex concepts of teaching and learning before teaching the students had the background knowledge of psychology as well as some elements of child health nursing.

### **6. Limitations**

It was recognized that there were many limitations at different levels. Regardless of the limitations this arduous process proved to be very rewarding to the writers. The writers were able to respond to a critical need at the national level to meet the shortage of nurse educators.

### **7. Way Forward**

In the interim and foreseeable future the planning for well educated baccalaureates is vital for the future of nursing in Pakistan. The face of nursing education underwent changes in the form of new content being added to the curriculum to make the curriculum culturally congruent and an innovative instructional method of moodle was introduced as an e learning pedagogy. The latter was in keeping with the HEC/PNC mandate that nurses would not lag behind other professionals in technology. Technology was used positively with the outcome of its utilization in the practice area upon graduation. The lessons learnt from introducing moodle as a e learning pedagogy could be used in other courses as well in the baccalaureate curriculum. From a teaching and learning perspective it is felt that there must be linkages with information technology professionals (Moule, Ward & Lockyer, 2010). Ongoing communication with PNC and other nursing schools is mandatory for delivery of the curriculum. Based on the results of our curricula innovation to meet the needs of the country we recommend that a formal study be carried to assess teaching learning practices of novice nurse educators. Lastly, our work could be further expanded to identify gaps for faculty preparedness to deliver this new HEC/PNC curriculum.

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