Student Empowerment: Baccalaureate Nursing Students Define Components of the Course Grade

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Purpose

To obtain input from nursing students to determine:

• Components of the course grade, and
• Student perceptions about the opportunity to provide input into the course grade.
Objectives

• **Identify two strategies to actively engage and involve nursing students in course planning.**

• **Incorporate one evidenced-based strategy regarding student engagement and involvement in the school of nursing curriculum and/or classes.**
Principles:

• According to Knowles (1973), adults learn differently than children, so teaching strategies should focus on principles that include a collaborative teacher/student relationship.

• According to Rogers (1969), the adult learning process is facilitated when the student has participation in the learning process.
Specifics of the Study

• Quantitative component
• Qualitative component
Procedures

- On the first day of class (Spring Semester 2012) in Health Care of the Older Adult, baccalaureate nursing students were given a survey that listed five (5) different groups of class activities that would be used to determine the course grade.
Procedures

• The students were given the opportunity to rank each group from 1-5 (with 1 being the highest rank and 5 being the lowest rank).

• Based on the results, the course grade was determined using the top ranked group chosen by the students and incorporated in the syllabus and course calendar.
Procedures

• On the last day of class (Spring Semester, 2012), the students were given a set of questions to answer that determined the student’s perceptions (feelings) about having input in determining the components of the course grade.
Research Participants

Total number of student participants - 60.

- Female - 54 students
- Male - 8 students
- Caucasian female - 44 students
- Caucasian male - 8 students
- African-American female - 8 students
- Biracial female - 2 students

- No students were under the age of 18.
- Two students were absent on the first day of class
Recruitment Procedures

On the first day of class, the students were provided a full explanation of the study and were allowed the opportunity to opt out of completing a survey.

The students were informed that inclusion or exclusion (by self) from the study would not have any effect on the grade received in the course.
Recruitment Procedures

- A faculty member who did not teach this course, provided the instruction and distributed the surveys to avoid any perception of coercion.
- **Note:** If a student was not present on the first day of class, they did not participate in the survey at the end of the semester. This was done to maintain continuity in the data.
Results
Survey on 1st day of Class

• Five (5) different sets/groups of class activities that were given for students to rank in order of preference.
Groups

Group One
• Three (3) tests – 30%
• Group Presentation – 30%
• Group Written Assignment – 30%
• Class Participation- 10%

Group Two
• Two (2) tests – 30%
• Two (2) homework assignments– 30%
• Group Written Assignment – 30%
• Class Participation- 10%
Groups

Group Three

• Three (3) tests – 30%
• Individual paper– 30%
• One (1) Homework Assignment – 30%
• Class Participation- 10%

Group Four

• Two (2) tests – 30%
• Group Presentation– 30%
• Three (3) Homework Assignments – 30%
• Class Participation- 10%
Groups

Group Five

• **Three (3) tests** – 30%

• **Individual Presentation** – 30%

• **Two (2) Homework Assignments** – 30%

• **Class Participation**- 10%
Survey on 1\textsuperscript{st} day of Class

• Students that ranked each set as their #1 choice
  – Set #1 – 25 students
  – Set #2 – 17 students
  – Set #3 – 16 students
  – Set #4 – 1 students
  – Set #5 – 1 student

– Note: $n = 60$ students participated in data collection on first day of class.
Group One - Highest Rank

• Three (3) tests – 30%
• Group Presentation – 30%
• Group Written Assignment – 30%
• Class Participation - 10%
Survey on Last day of Class

• The students were given a survey with three questions.
  – 60 students participated in the data collection on the last day of class.
Question #1

- On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest, rate your experience with having input on the class activities that determined the course grade.
  - $n = 60$

- **Responses**
  - 5 – 54 (90.0%)
  - 4 – 5 (8.0%)
  - 3 – 0
  - 2 – 1 (2%)
  - 1 – 0
Question #2

- Which of the following would you prefer in future nursing classes? Check one (1).
  - A ___ I prefer to have input into the components of the course grade.
  - B ___ I prefer the faculty to determine all the components of the course grade.

- N = 60
- Choice A – 59 (98.30%)
- Choice B – 1 (1.70%)
Question #3

- Now that the semester is over, explain how you felt about having individual input into the components of the grade for Health Care of the Older Adult.
When analyzing the written comments to this question, there were seven (7) themes that were identified:

1. Students felt it was a good idea to allow them to have input and be a part of the learning process.

2. Students felt more accountability for their learning experience.
Question #3- Identified Themes (cont.)

3. Students felt more autonomy.
4. Students felt an increased ability to succeed.
5. Students felt more appreciated by the instructor.
6. Students felt this approach should be adopted in the future.
7. Students expressed some concerns about this approach.
Identified Themes

Sample Comments
Students felt it was a good idea to allow them to have input and be a part of the learning process.

- Great idea to have an say or input in the learning process
- Choosing assignments maintained a sense of balance and control over stressful demands of nursing school/anxiety reliever
- Allowed students to choose what works best in a given situation/or learning style
- Gave student a feeling that they were part of the learning process
Students felt it was a good idea to allow them to have input and be a part of the learning process (cont.)

• Felt their opinion mattered
• Played a part in the setup of the class which we are not allowed to do in many classes
• Other experiences have been “non-negotiable” or forced
• Like being given a variety of different options
Students felt more accountability

- More responsible for grades earned
- Can’t blame anyone else
- Made them feel accountable and then they wanted to do their best because they made the choice.
Students felt more autonomy

• More control with personal outcomes
Students felt an increased ability to succeed

• Approach helped students to succeed
• Helped students feel more comfortable/knew where grade was coming from
• Could organize myself and time better
• Like that tests didn’t carry a huge amount of weight on the final grade
Students felt more appreciated by the instructor

• Instructor is willing to work with us
• Instruction presented in a professional manner and made it a reality
• Shows the teacher cares
• Allowed teacher to see what students would like to get out of the class
• More respect for the teacher- thankful she allowed us that privilege
Students felt this approach should be adopted in the future

- Great experience- hope other classes follow as well
- More instructors should adopt this method
Student concerns

• May be some integral experience missed if students are allowed too much input.

• Did not like what majority of class chose, so would prefer faculty to decide.
What Can You Do?
What can you do?

• Start at your own pace.
  ....ask questions.
• Do what works best for you and your class/students, etc.
• Every class is different.
References


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