Challenges in Fostering Critical Thinking of Students in Developing Countries: Ghana as a Case Study

Christian Makafui Boso
PhD(C), MN, RN
Disclosure

- Co-authors: Christian Makafui Boso (University of Cape Coast) and Prof. Janet Gross (Global Health Services Partnership, US Peace Corps, Uganda)
- No conflict of interest to report; study sponsored by the authors
- Learner Objectives:
  - Identify challenges developing countries face in fostering critical thinking in students
  - Describe strategies to foster critical thinking skills in nurse educators and students
Outline

- Background to the Study
- Purpose Statement
- Research Questions
- Methodology
- Key Findings and Discussion
- Recommendations
- Conclusions
Nurse educators are essential element in education.

Health care professionals’ critical thinking skills directly affect patient safety (Robert & Petersen, 2013).

In Ghana, indicators suggest lack of critical thinking skills (Adjatey, 2013; Adofo, 2010).

Students are still taught to follow the functional model of nursing care.
Purpose Statement

- To identify barriers that hinder nurse educators from fostering critical thinking of students
Research Questions

- What instructional strategies do nursing faculty use to promote the development of critical thinking in students?

- What are the barriers that hinder nursing faculty from fostering critical thinking in students?
Methodology

- Design: multi-site cross-sectional descriptive

- Setting: 11 nursing schools in Ghana

- Target population: nurse educators in 2 types of nursing programs
Methodology (Cont’d)

- Sample size: 106 (65% retrieval rate)
- Sampling technique: cluster sampling
- Data collection tool: self-reported questionnaire
- Data Analysis: descriptive statistics & factor analysis
Key Findings/Discussion

- Teaching methods most frequently identified were:
  - Discussion (75.5%)
  - Lecture (69.8%)
Key Findings/Discussion (cont’d)

- Barriers to fostering critical thinking:
  - Course structure and materials;
  - Lack of institutional framework/support;
  - Students’ characteristics;
  - Time limitations;
Barriers (cont’d)

– Faculty limitations;
– Seeing faculty as authority that should not be challenged;
– Encouraging inappropriate learning styles; and
– Desire for good grades.
Other barriers

- Educational system in Ghana promotes rote learning ("chew and pour");
- Nursing care in Ghana focuses on task orientation;
- Large class sizes; and
- Lack of continuing professional development programs on critical thinking for educators.
Recommendations

- Employers should institute educational programs on critical thinking
- Nursing schools should introduce critical thinking into basic nursing curricula
- Authorities/policymakers in nursing education should prioritize teaching skills of critical thinking
Conclusion

- Nursing programs are not adequately preparing nurses with requisite skills for safe practice
- Critical thinking skills are essential for safe nursing practice
- Ghana’s nursing educational system is faced with numerous barriers to the promotion of critical thinking


REFERENCES

Thank you
Questions