

For the sustained development and implementation of effective curricula which promotes student learning in nursing education in regional, remote and Pacific locations.

Overview

The competence of nurses in the health care system is paramount for the delivery of quality patient outcomes. The delivery of safe and effective nursing services is dependent upon many factors including the availability of nursing curricula of international standard and standards of practice relevant to the context, the curriculum, and the clinical experience available to undergraduate and postgraduate nursing students. Within a Faculty and University located in regional, tropical North Queensland and as educational and research leaders within the tropical/Pacific triangle, staff of the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Nutrition have a mandate to provide nursing education for students in regional, remote and Pacific locations. This is a core aspect of the School's strategic focus.

Integral to their vision and mandate to provide nursing education that meets the needs of undergraduate and postgraduate nursing students in these locations, since 2001 the team have provided expert curricula development for students in regional North Queensland and the Fiji School of Nursing. These contributions to student learning in North Queensland and the Pacific region reflect the team's command in the field of nurse education, and have both emanated from and enabled reciprocal learning outcomes for nursing students at James Cook University. Specifically, these outstanding contributions to student learning are:

- Development of innovative delivery methods for the undergraduate nursing curriculum across 4 campuses in tropical North Queensland;
- Development of a contextualised, contemporary basic/undergraduate nursing curriculum that reflects and meets international standards and meets the needs of nursing students in regional, remote and Pacific locations;
- Scoping, development and delivery of mental health postgraduate level nursing course reflective of Pacific Island needs and that has led to the development of an undergraduate mental health major for James Cook University students;
- Development of distance subjects on physical and mental health assessment for delivery via the Pacific Open Learning Network to students across the South Pacific

Criterion 2: Development of curricula, resources and services that reflect a command of the field

James Cook University has successfully serviced the educational needs of nursing students located in regional, rural and remote locations since 1989. The team has been pivotal to the development of curriculum and course structures to enable the successful delivery of an undergraduate nursing course across campuses in regional, rural and remote locations. For example, they instigated and developed flexible means for delivery of the nursing program at both Mt Isa and Thursday Island (Usher, Lindsay & Mackay 2005), and for external delivery (Foster, Usher, Luck, Harvey & Lindsay 2008). The findings from evaluations of students enrolled in the remote campuses and the external program indicate that these initiatives have been very successful. Graduates of these programs are successfully employed throughout the state, nation and internationally.

In 2001, using their specific expertise in nurse education for students in these locations, members of the team collaborated with the Fiji School of Nursing (FSN) to develop curricula that met the needs of undergraduate and postgraduate nursing students. This highly successful collaboration with offshore students was enabled by the initial successful implementation of nurse education for our onshore students, and has subsequently led to a cyclical enhancement of learning outcomes for both.

Initially, the James Cook University accredited undergraduate curriculum was adapted for external delivery, with modification of only the type of material delivery, and little change to the content, assessment or clinical requirements. Residential schools were implemented to assist the students to master specific science content and the disciplines' psychomotor skills. Following implementation of this external curriculum, adaptations were made to produce a 'mixed mode' curriculum for delivery at remote sites (Mount Isa, Thursday Island) to enable a variety of rural and Indigenous people to become registered nurses. The mixed

mode requires onsite academic support for the students as well as the materials supplied for the external students.

Lessons learned during these processes were used by the team to guide the Fiji nurse educators to develop and implement their new curriculum. Extensive consultation and collaboration with these Pacific colleagues was undertaken to produce a curriculum that is contemporary, competency-based, of international standing, and is recognised as being of degree award status.

The curricula which were developed for both North Queensland and in Fiji demonstrate a command of the discipline of nursing as the content is contemporary, contextualised and evidence based. Both curricula have been accredited by their respective nursing registration bodies (Queensland Board of Nursing Studies and the Fiji Nurses, Midwives and Nurse Practitioner Board (FNMNPB)) for the maximum period of 5 years.

The Regional Adviser for Human Resources for Health to the World Health Organization (WHO) for many years, Mrs Lorraine Kerse, adds that the curriculum 'is contemporary and related to the situation in Pacific island countries', and the JCU staff had 'well-developed interpersonal skills and communicated effectively across cultural boundaries'. 'It was the personal and professional attributes of the staff involved in this WHO project that made it successful where a number of other Universities had not succeeded in the past. All the review and implementation process was collegial and included capacity building of the staff of the Fiji School of Nursing.'

Initially, 120 students were accepted into the new curriculum at the Fiji School of Nursing in 2005. Of these, over 100 students graduated at the end of 2007. All graduates were employed by the Fiji Ministry of Health in various healthcare settings throughout Fiji. Some are planning to emigrate to New Zealand and beyond, and due to the international standard of the course will be able to register as a nurse in New Zealand subject to achieving a satisfactory IELTS score. Each year since 2005, increasing numbers of students have continued to enrol in the course at the FSN. In 2008, the cohort numbers 140. Feedback about student and graduate performance and skills from staff at the FSN, Fiji Ministry of Health, and from clinicians, senior staff and educators in settings throughout Fiji has been extremely positive. Clinical nurses and physicians report increased levels of knowledge, skills, and interpersonal ability of the students. FSN tutors, clinical nurse educators and senior staff nurses report that the students are performing more critically, more assertively, and with a better knowledge base than those 'trained' prior to the new curriculum. In recognition of the quality and standing of the curriculum, it has also been adopted for use by the other (private) School of Nursing in Fiji and is being used as a base curriculum to upgrade the nursing courses in other Pacific Island countries.

Statement of Contribution

Feedback from stakeholders (individual patients) in Fiji:

These new graduates really listen to what you say.

They tell me what to expect and what I have to do.

They teach me what I need to know to manage my heart problem at home.

According to the Acting Director of Nursing Services, the Acting Principal of the Fiji School of Nursing (FSN) and the senior tutors of the SN, the new graduates are:

Assertive and challenge the older staff to provide rationales for decisions

Have excellent communication skills

Have critical thinking skills that have impressed the medical officers.

A closely related initiative to was also undertaken with the Ministry of Health as a support for and an extension of the development of the nursing curriculum. The scope of practice review and development of standards for the Fijian nurses was undertaken to extend the impact of the new curriculum and thus to enhance the health care of the people of Fiji. This project ascertained the current scopes of practice for nurses, midwives and Nurse Practitioners, and established standards for each. The project has produced a pivotal document in the review, design and development of nursing curricula and education in Fiji and has been adopted by other Pacific Island Nations to develop their own frameworks.

**Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning 2008:
Prof Kim Usher, Ms Joanne Tollefson, Dr Kim Foster and Dr Lee Stewart (JCU)**

JCU students have benefited tremendously from the School's offshore curricula development in Fiji, and since 2005 a number of students have been able to gain valuable clinical education in Fiji through the collaborative relationship developed between both institutions. These experiences have contributed to enhanced cultural understandings and clinical skills development. Returning students commented, "it was fascinating to explore differences and similarities between our two countries' nursing courses. The Fijian students were especially surprised by the amount of theory we had studied and we were impressed by the fact that each one of them is required to complete 10 deliveries (of infants) before graduating".

The team have also used their experience of developing the curriculum and subjects in Fiji to further internationalise the James Cook University nursing curriculum. For example, Fiji nursing has a primary health care delivery focus and the team has been able to introduce aspects of the Fiji experience to strengthen their own curriculum, as well as enhance student learning opportunities and outcomes. Working with a developing country has augmented the team members' knowledge of other countries' health issues and indicators to enliven the knowledge imparted to local students.

Subsequently, in 2005, as part of our successful ongoing collaboration with the FSN, members of the team then developed a curriculum for a mental health postgraduate level equivalent qualification. This was the first postgraduate mental health nursing curriculum to be offered in Fiji or in the Pacific Island Nations. The curriculum was subsequently developed using a similar consultative process to that used in the development of the FSN undergraduate curriculum.

In 2005, a needs analysis for the proposed curriculum was conducted with key stakeholders in Fiji (including staff of the FSN, St Giles Hospital medical and nursing staff, and staff at the Fiji MoH) and was contracted and funded by AusAID to develop a year-long postgraduate mental health nursing curriculum (to be offered by the FSN) which would meet the needs of registered nurses in Fiji. The curriculum, which was the outcome of consultation and collaboration with key stakeholders, was developed and accepted without amendment by the FNMNPB in June 2006. JCU staff were contracted by AusAID to deliver the first course and mentor and build the capacity of FSN tutors so that they would ultimately take over the running of the course.

The first cohort (12 students) was selected by the Fiji MoH and commenced the course in September, 2006. Ten of the twelve students successfully completed the course and graduated in September, 2007. They are all currently working as registered nurses in Fiji, in roles where they are using their mental health nursing education. One of the non-graduating students will be able to complete the course in 2008 and will then be eligible to graduate. The graduating students and the FSN staff teaching in the course considered the curriculum to have produced a very successful and useful course that benefited them personally, academically and professionally. Learning outcomes included development of advanced therapeutic communication skills, the nursing skills to care for people with mental illness, increased knowledge of psychopathology and treatment regimens as well as the generic academic skills.

Feedback about the quality and success of this course received from professional colleagues in Australia and overseas, industry doctors and nurses in mental health in Fiji, staff of the Fiji School of Nursing and the Fiji Ministry of Health, and from students in the course, has been extremely positive. The standard of the curriculum and the success of the program has been recognised as outstanding by industry professionals in Fiji and Australia, the Fiji MoH and FSN, and by AusAID. At the completion of the first offering of the course in September 2007, the FSN and Fiji MoH recommended that the course continue, and a second cohort of students commenced the course in February 2008. Team members continue to work with FSN staff in a mentoring role and teaching into the course to ensure that the health care outcomes are sustainable over the next few years, until a critical mass of mental health nursing professionals (both clinicians and educators) have the knowledge and experience to maintain the course.

The curriculum for the mental health nursing course has also been presented to Pacific region members of the World Health Organisation's Pacific Islands Mental Health Network (PIMHNet) in October 2007. PIMHNet members commented positively on the international standard of the course, that other countries throughout the Pacific were aware of its success and had expressed interest in using the course for nurses in their country, and suggested the team continue in their mentoring role in the course. Evaluations from the final subject in the course (questions used from the JCU Student Feedback on Subjects) from the cohort in 2007 are presented in the table below.

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Criteria	2007 results (n =11)
The quality of the learning experience during the intensive was	5
The interest level generated during this intensive was	5
The explanations given by staff about mental health nursing during the intensive were	4.8
The level to which we accomplished the aims of the subject was	4.8
Where '1' = completely unacceptable to '5' = outstanding	

In the Course Evaluation conducted after graduation in 2007, graduates from the first cohort reflected on their learning outcomes and made comment on their satisfaction with the course, how their learning had affected their ability to care for patients, and their plans to work in mental health after graduation:

It has enhanced my nursing care and how I view and deal with clients out in the community. i.e. genuinely listening to them, focusing on their strengths also rather than just the problems.

Really helped me to understand client needs and my role in attending to clients.

I had a great time in the program. Not only did I learn a lot of new skills/techniques but groomed myself personally. I would like to thank JCU and the FSN for that.

This course has given me the confidence and knowledge I need to be a facilitator of mental health and help other tutors in teaching mental health.

I am very glad to work as a registered nurse in mental health after doing this very interesting course.

The expertise developed by team members in developing this curriculum subsequently led to the construction and implementation of a mental health major for students in the undergraduate curriculum at JCU. In 2007, the major, a first in the history of the School, was endorsed by the University and by the Queensland Nursing Council, and in 2008 the first cohort of students has commenced.

A related aspect of nurse education in the Pacific has involved team members developing a Physical and Psychosocial Assessment subject for Pacific Island country RNs via the Pacific Open Learning Health Network and conducting the subject online for two years. Students who have worked through the materials have learned the basic skills of assessment to use within their workplaces in Pacific Island countries such as Tuvalu, Nauru, Vanuatu and Fiji. The team's expertise in developing distance materials for JCU students contributed to the efficacy of this package and its ease of use by students who, once they felt comfortable with internet based learning, worked well and achieved their goals. Material developed for this online subject (video clips, scenarios) have subsequently also been incorporated into the JCU undergraduate curriculum.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this team has very successfully conceived and implemented curricula and associated resources to serve and assist the nurses of Fiji and, more broadly, the South Pacific Island Nations in contemporising and elevating the standard of the health care they provide to their peoples. These curricula and resources have evolved from, and in turn contributed to, the regional and remote nursing curricula work of the team over more than seven years. The contributions have occurred at the pre-registration, post graduate and service levels of nursing care and represent an outstanding contribution to nurse teaching and student learning in this region. These successes have been accomplished using expert interpersonal communication, cultural knowledge and sensitivity and a broad and deep knowledge of the educational needs of nurses in an international setting. From the experiences gained by the team, JCU student learning and outcomes have also been enhanced demonstrating a synergy that increases the breadth and depth of student learning and outcomes in both our 'home' curriculum and in those we have assisted our colleagues to develop.