Simulation as a learning strategy: Supporting undergraduate nursing students with disabilities.

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Abstract

Simulation as a learning strategy: Supporting undergraduate nursing students with disabilities. With advances in technology and increasing demands on clinical resources, simulation as an alternative learning strategy is becoming increasingly popular in supporting the educational preparation of tertiary students. In particular, schools of nursing have embraced this approach as a component of their undergraduate curriculum. Simulation activities developed using learning outcomes, guided preparation and reflection enable students to exercise clinical decision making in a supportive and realistic clinical setting, prior to attending clinical placement. This supportive learning technology facilitates both the acquisition of competence and confidence by the student which leads to a more meaningful clinical placement experience. Impetus for embracing simulation as a learning strategy has also gathered momentum because of the recent amendments to the Disability Discrimination Act (2009). These amendments require providers of education to take proactive steps to prevent discrimination and to provide reasonable adjustments for students with disability in their course progression while maintaining the academic integrity of the program. One university’s school of nursing and midwifery has responded to this challenge by initiating the Inherent Requirements of Nursing Education (IRONE) project. The purpose of this project was to articulate, develop and embed inherent requirement statements into undergraduate nursing curricula. Part of this process has involved identifying where reasonable adjustments can be made to learning and assessment activities. The use of simulation as an alternative learning strategy became evident as reasonable adjustments could be assessed by using medium and high fidelity simulation tools. This provided the opportunity to evaluate the reasonable adjustments and the student’s capacity to function in a simulated learning environment prior to participating in clinical placement. This process would facilitate monitoring of the student’s ability to effectively function prior to engaging with the general public. Using simulation in this way supports the learning of students with disability by allowing the academic and disability services to make reasonable adjustments taking into account the student’s disability in a fair and equitable manner. This paper describes the school’s leadership in this area and the benefits that simulation offers in supporting the educational preparation of undergraduate nursing students with disabilities. Examples
are drawn from the school’s experiences which illustrate how medium and high fidelity simulation tools were used. The discussion recommends simulation is used in determining reasonable adjustments for undergraduate nursing students with disabilities as a contemporary curriculum practice. Adoption of simulation in this way will therefore meet two imperatives: (1) compliance with recent legislative requirements and (2) embracing advances in learning technologies. It is anticipated that using simulation in this way is more likely to offer students with disabilities an enhanced learning experience.

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