EVALUATION OF THE DOUBLE DEGREE NURSING PROGRAM, 
FACULTY OF NURSING SCIENCE, RANGSIT UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Background: In 2010, the Faculty of Nursing Science, Rangsit University, Thailand designed a double degree nursing program in collaboration with Mälardalen University in Sweden. The aim was to educate student nurses who will be culturally and linguistically competent in providing nursing care. To abide by the Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education regulations, the faculty must assess the program for the purpose of improvement by the end of 2014.

Objective: To assess the operational outcomes of the Double Degree Nursing Program.

Methods: Using a descriptive design, a purposive sample of 70 nursing students was selected from sophomore to senior classes. Research instruments included self-report questionnaire forms to assess students' perceptions of input, process, and learning outcomes of the program. The overall reliability by Cronbach' alpha coefficient indicated high reliability at 0.97. Data were collected throughout August to September 2013 and analyzed using descriptive statistics i.e. percentages, frequency, mean and standard deviations.

Results: For English language skills, the students were found to be improving when compared to the time prior to entering the program. The program overall was found to be appropriate and beneficial to the nursing profession, able to educate professional nurses to be knowledgeable not only in nursing science but also in related sciences and, considering the current situation, the program was rated “quite suitable” to “most suitable”.

For input, more than 50 percent agreed that those who were entering the program should possess English proficiency at a “good” to “excellent” level.
**Conclusions:** Overall, the program was found to be suitable under the current situation and for professional development. The process of selecting students for the program remains crucial to the success of the program - especially in language competency.

**Keywords:** evaluation, double degree nursing program.

**BACKGROUND**

The Faculty of Nursing Science, Rangsit University is an educational institute which provides education and qualifies graduates who can serve the current health system in Thailand as well as internationally. In 2010, the Faculty of Nursing Science, Rangsit University, Thailand designed a double degree nursing program in collaboration with Mälardalen University in Sweden. This program contains bilingual teaching using Thai and English. The aim is to educate student nurses who will be culturally and linguistically competent and able to provide nursing care either internationally or to international patients domestically.

According to the Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, the six domains of learning outcomes are 1) ethics and morality development, 2) knowledge, 3) cognitive skills, 4) interpersonal skills and responsibilities, 5) analytical, communication, and numerical skills, and 6) professional nursing skills. All domains were assessed [1]. To abide by the Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (2009) regulations the faculty must assess the program for the purpose of improvement by year’s end, 2014 [1].

The CIPP model which was developed by Daniel L. Stufflebeam in 1966 [2] was used as the conceptual framework for the study. The four areas of context, input, process and product were applied to evaluate the program.

The contextual evaluation included philosophy, objectives, credits requirement, content, characteristics of instructors and characteristics of nursing graduates. Qualification of students and educational supportive systems were evaluated as an input. The process of teaching and learning with emphasis on self-directed learning was assessed in the process. The six domains of learning outcomes based on the Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education was evaluated as a product.

In Thailand, the CIPP model is widely used in the evaluation of Nursing Programs. Several studies have revealed that [3,5] curriculum is appropriate for use in the range of a moderate to high level. However, the physical environment to
support activities in the learning process such as classroom environment, computer systems, laboratory rooms and conference rooms need to be sufficient enough to support educational efforts [4].

METHODS

Using a descriptive design the purposive sample of 70 nursing students falling within the inclusion criteria were willing to participate in the study and were selected from sophomore to senior classes. Research instruments included self-report questionnaire forms with five rating scales ranging from 1-5 (less suitable-most suitable) to assess the students’ perceptions of input, process and learning outcomes of the program. The validity of the instrument was approved by three experts in nursing who had developed the curriculum. The reliability of the students’ perceptions of input, process, learning outcomes and overall reflections concerning the program were by carried out with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient at 0.91, 0.92, 0.88 and 0.97 respectively. Data were collected throughout August to September 2013 and analyzed using descriptive statistics i.e. percentages, frequency, mean and standard deviations.

Ethical consideration

Ethical consideration on human rights protection was supported by the Faculty of Nursing Science, Rangsit University. All students who participated in the study received information regarding the purpose of the study, the research process, and protection of their rights from the researcher. Students were assured of their right to participate or withdraw from the study with no affect on appraisals or grading.

RESULTS

For English language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), the students were found to be improving when compared to the time prior to entering the program.

The program’s overall content was found to be appropriate and beneficial to the nursing profession, able to educate professional nurses who are knowledgeable not only in nursing science but also in related sciences and,
considering the current situation, the program was rated “quite suitable” to “the most suitable”

Nevertheless, more than 50 percent agreed that those who were entering the program should possess English proficiency at the “good” to “excellent” level.

Support facilities weighing in at the “high” and “highest” level were internet network, instructor to student ratio (78.8%), classroom environments (72.7%), learning resources (60.6%), and activities related to cultural differences (54.6%).

For evaluation process, results stated that 66.7% of the students were satisfied with the teaching-learning process at the “high” and “highest” level. The students expressed satisfaction regarding documentation and teaching materials (85.8%) designed for self-directed learning (84.7%) and critical thinking especially in clinical practice (75.7%). However, the percentage of agreement regarding assignments in each course was at 39.4%.

In terms of the product, the students agreed that learning outcome domains rated at the “high” to “highest” level in the domain of moral and ethical development, interpersonal skills and responsibilities, professional nursing skills, cognitive knowledge, analytical skills, communication and numerical skills.

**DISCUSSION**

The results found in the study revealed that the nursing program of the Faculty of Nursing Science, Rangsit University is appropriate for the nursing profession. This is because the program was designed to develop student nurses who will be culturally and linguistically competent able to provide nursing care internationally or care for international patients. Although the majority of students didn’t meet English language criteria before admission, teaching strategies emphasized self-directed learning with bilingual assistance in order to improve their language competency.

According to the Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, the instructors in each course have to create course guidelines including learning objectives, process, outcomes and evaluations before classes begin. Teaching strategies to develop moral and profession ethics, knowledge, cognitive interpersonal skills and responsibilities, analytical skills, communication and numerical skills, and professional nursing skills were designed based on previous evaluation. As a result, the students perceived the nursing programs appropriate
and beneficial to the nursing profession. However, students enrolled in the program must initially meet English language proficiency criteria.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the program was found to be suitable, under the current situation, for professional development. The process of selecting students for the program remains crucial to the success of the program.

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