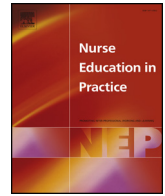




ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Nurse Education in Practice

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/nepr](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/nepr)

Original research

## Testing the efficacy of a scaffolded writing intervention with online degree-completion nursing students: A quasi-experimental design

Louise C. Miller<sup>a,\*</sup>, Cynthia L. Russell<sup>b</sup>, An-Lin Cheng<sup>c</sup>, Shawn Zembles<sup>b</sup><sup>a</sup> University of Missouri Sinclair School of Nursing, School of Nursing Building, University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, MO, 65211, USA<sup>b</sup> University of Missouri Kansas City School of Nursing and Health Studies, 2464 Charlotte St, Kansas City, MO, 64108, USA<sup>c</sup> University of Missouri Kansas City School of Medicine, 2411 Holmes St, Kansas City, MO, 64108, USA

## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Competency

Education

Nursing baccalaureate

Literacy

Quasi-experimental design

Self-efficacy

## ABSTRACT

Writing should receive dedicated time in the nursing classroom for students to become competent writers, offering practical experiences for them to critically think and organize their ideas into meaningful messages. The purpose of this pre-post quasi-experimental study was to compare implementation of a scaffolded sequence of writing assignments (intervention) to typical writing assignments (comparison) in final coursework for baccalaureate nursing (BSN) completion students. Student writing self-efficacy and writing competency were measured pre and post coursework using the Post Secondary Writerly Self-Efficacy Scale, 6 + 1 Trait scale and Holistic scale. A convenience sample of 78 BSN-completion students at two Midwestern universities in the US were recruited to participate. The sample was primarily female (83%) and Caucasian (81%). There were no significant differences between the two groups on self-efficacy scores ( $p = 0.594$ ). Significant group differences were noted on writing competency as assessed by the 6 + 1 Trait scale ( $p = 0.004$ ) but not the Holistic scale ( $p = 0.024$ ). No significant correlation between writing self-efficacy scores and writing competency were apparent (Holistic scale,  $p = 0.601$ ; 6 + 1 Trait scale,  $p = 0.615$ ). Writing skill-building needs attention to assure student competency. Educational interventions implemented in BSN education must be tested for efficacy and effectiveness.

## 1. Introduction

The need to be a strong, effective writer to present and defend ideas cannot be emphasized enough in today's complex, highly technical, and often problematic healthcare environment. Communication in clinical settings can be particularly challenging, knowing that professional writing must be technically correct, clear, and focused to avoid confusion and misinterpretation, and ultimately prevent mistakes. Practicing nurses have demanding communication requirements, requiring concise, accurate, and timely messaging. The long-standing responsibility for documentation of nursing care is dependent on precise wording to reflect planning, delivery, and evaluation of patient services. Facility-wide policies and protocols must be methodically written to ensure day-to-day implementation of best patient care practices. Likewise, nurses' contributions to patient safety monitoring and reporting, documentation of errors, corrective plans of action, and follow up evaluation as well as compliance with federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) standards (<https://www.cms.gov/>) result in substantial nurse accountability. This documentation, in turn, has lasting legal implications. Given these responsibilities, the

graduate nurse competency requiring clear and effective communication identified in *The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice* (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2008) cannot be overstated in terms of its importance to safe, accountable, quality nursing care. It is imperative then that nurse educators respond to nursing practice's demands for high level communication skills by preparing students with meaningful written and verbal educational experiences in anticipation of the professional nursing role.

A call to action to explicitly teach and reinforce student writing skills in undergraduate and graduate nursing programs has increasingly received attention in the nursing literature over the past two decades (Andre and Graves, 2013; Hawks et al., 2016; Oermann et al., 2015; Stevens et al., 2014; Troxler et al., 2011; Whitehead, 2002). The challenge we face as nurse educators is to support students to develop and improve their writing skills while, at the same time, deliver a dense didactic and technical curriculum that meets baccalaureate nursing (BSN) educational standards. To 'learn nursing', faculty typically test students' mastery of specific points (Mandlco et al., 2012), rather than encouraging written self-expression and individual thought to foster

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 573 289 4475.

E-mail addresses: [LMiller@missouri.edu](mailto:LMiller@missouri.edu) (L.C. Miller), [RussellC@umkc.edu](mailto:RussellC@umkc.edu) (C.L. Russell), [ChengA@umkc.edu](mailto:ChengA@umkc.edu) (A.-L. Cheng), [ZemblesS@umkc.edu](mailto:ZemblesS@umkc.edu) (S. Zembles).<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2018.06.011>

Received 29 November 2017; Received in revised form 24 March 2018; Accepted 24 June 2018

1471-5953/ © 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

learning.

To address these concerns in the classroom, we studied online degree completion students to test their success in improving writing competencies using a systematic, sequenced set of writing assignments that were embedded in existing baccalaureate nursing coursework. Using writing, students have the opportunity ‘take charge’ of their learning, creating and crafting meaningful messages that reflect their understanding, point of view, and commitment to their ideas. Using writing as the vehicle for learning is fundamental to principles of *Writing in the Discipline*, a way of thinking about writing developed and disseminated by classroom educators in Composition and Rhetoric (Anson and Lyles, 2011).

### 1.1. Pedagogical approach

*Disciplinary Literacy* serves as the pedagogical underpinning for this project (Shanahan and Shanahan, 2008). This concept, articulated in childhood/adolescent education, is defined as “advanced literacy instruction embedded within content-area classes such as math, science, and social studies” (p. 40). In other words, a learner acquires discipline-specific knowledge when learning requisite knowledge and skills within the context and boundaries of that discipline; one of these skills is discipline-specific writing. In the mid-1970s, this perspective was adopted in United States (US) college classrooms and operationalized as *Writing Across the Curriculum* (Bazerman et al., 2005). Central to this idea is that writing can be used effectively as a mode for students to learn to think critically within and about their selected discipline (Price and Harrington, 2010; Tsui, 2002). Two basic tenets make up *Writing Across the Curriculum: Learning to Write* and *Writing to Learn* (Clark and Fischbach, 2008). Therefore, in nursing, as students learn to write, they practice the technical, accepted use of language and conventions consistent with nursing. As students write to learn in their chosen discipline, *Writing in the Discipline*, they move to higher level thinking and synthesis of ideas as they construct their own knowledge and understanding. Underpinning these writing behaviors are two fundamental concepts: *writing self-efficacy*, defined as the individual's belief in his/her abilities to perform a task (successfully to reach a particular goal) (Bandura, 1997), and *writing confidence*, defined as having the necessary writing skills to produce an organized, coherent message that addresses purposeful ideas, logical organization, and effective use of language (Arkle, 2012; Education Northwest, 2013; Rice, 2011).

Concepts behind *Writing Across the Curriculum* thinking and the requirements at many universities in the US to offer discipline-specific writing intensive courses opened the dialogue about effective strategies to teach writing in the post-secondary classroom. One fundamental strategy, drawn from childhood development and widely used in childhood education, is the concept of *scaffolding*. First articulated by Lev Vygotsky (1978) as the *zone of proximal development*, and now applied to the instructional principle of scaffolding, this strategy suggests learning takes place along a continuum from the simple to the complex under the guidance of a more experienced mentor. Therefore, the learner practices simple, less complicated singular tasks that build to more complex, more difficult thinking tasks to construct his/her own schema of knowledge (Berk and Winsler, 1995). Applied to writing, students begin with a single assignment focused on a specific purpose with limited criteria for production and grading of the written work. As students learn and practice start-up skills, they progress to more difficult assignments requiring integration of more complex thinking to complete assigned writing tasks (The WAC Clearinghouse, 2006).

A related writing concept is the use of *higher and lower order* elements (Purdue, 2013). Lower order elements refer to the mechanics of writing, i.e. spelling, grammar, punctuation, citation style, and formatting. Prior to formalizing the curricular approach, correct use of lower order elements was viewed as meeting the expectations for quality writing. After adoption of the across the curriculum approach in the 1970s, higher order elements became the critical component of

quality writing. The focus now is on having a clear thesis statement or position, a well-defined purpose addressing a target audience, logical organization and transitions between ideas, and evidence of thoughtful selection and integration of peer-reviewed literature (Bazerman et al., 2005). The important point of the discussion here is that ideas, and the flow and organization of these ideas, are central to developing capable student writers. Emphasis on higher order thinking (ideas, focus, structure) and assignments that start small and develop more complex thinking and understanding (scaffolding) should be priorities when teaching writing. Writing is the vehicle to one's independent thinking, knowledge and understanding.

## 2. Background

Advocates of *Writing Across the Curriculum and Disciplines* for teaching writing to nursing students cite the use of writing as a necessary means to learn critical thinking skills (Bean, 2011; Borglin and Fagerström, 2012; Carter and Rukholm, 2008; Cowles et al., 2001; Zygmunt and Schaefer, 2006) and to develop research and scholarship skills demanded of the professional practicing nurse (Andre and Graves, 2013). Yet, writing course requirements for BSN programs appear to be seriously deficient as demonstrated by the 2011 evaluation of BSN programs in Canada, showing only 32 of 81 programs reviewed (39.5%) required a writing course. Even fewer, only five of these 81 programs (6.2%), required a discipline-specific writing course (Andre and Graves, 2013). Further, Whitehead (2002) documented 15 years ago that nursing students struggled with academic writing assignments, and importantly, identified lack of support from faculty as a challenge to *learning to write*.

Consistent with writing curriculum strategies, scaffolding using sequential assignments from the simple to the complex is supported for design and implementation of writing assignments, both within stand-alone courses and across the curriculum (Gazza and Hunker, 2012; Luthy et al., 2009; Mason, 2005; Troxler et al., 2011). Courses promoting critical thinking, scholarship skills, and professional, ethical values for practice are reported in the literature to offer a clear opportunity to implement a strong writing component into the course (Luthy et al., 2009; McMillan and Raines, 2011). While higher order elements have been emphasized more recently when designing assignments and evaluating student writing (Carter, 2008; Hanson Diehl, 2007; Luthy et al., 2009), systematic evaluation of student gains in writing skills is typically measured in terms of use of lower order elements, e.g., punctuation, spelling, and the like, ability to use research search skills, and/or students' perceptions of and feelings about their own writing competencies as opposed to actual measurement of demonstrated writing competencies (Mandleco et al., 2012; Schmidt, 2004).

While the recommendations are clear, i.e. writing skill-development is a necessary element to baccalaureate education, rigorous *Writing in the Discipline* research in nursing is limited. Oermann et al., (2015) documented this deficiency in their systematic review of educational programs and strategies used to teach writing skills to nurses and nursing students. This current project addresses this challenge to subject writing interventions delivered in the nursing classroom to testing by comparing a writing intensive intervention with a typical teaching approach to improve writing competencies of online degree completion students.

## 3. Research questions

This study offers an innovative approach to link research methodology with teaching practices in the classroom to assess the impact of a sequenced, structured writing intervention to improve students' writing self-efficacy and writing competency as compared to those who receive traditional writing assignments. Three research questions were developed: (1) What is the difference in change in writing self-efficacy

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/11002184>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/11002184>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)