



Integrating learning assessment and supervision in a competency framework for clinical workplace education



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SUMMARY

Although competency-based education is well established in health care education, research shows that the competencies do not always match the reality of clinical workplaces. Therefore, there is a need to design feasible and evidence-based competency frameworks that fit the workplace reality. This theoretical paper outlines a competency-based framework, designed to facilitate learning, assessment and supervision in clinical workplace education. Integration is the cornerstone of this holistic competency framework.

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Introduction

Competency-based education is well established in health care education but there is still much work that needs to be done to make it a workable reality in clinical education (Pijl-Zieber et al., 2014a). Current literature identifies some areas that make the practical implementation of competency-based education problematic: 1) divergent values among stakeholders as a result of the lack of consensus on the definition of competence within health care (Pijl-Zieber et al., 2014a); 2) imbalance between specific and general competencies (Pijl-Zieber et al., 2014a); 3) problematic holistic assessment of clinical competence (competence is more than the sum of individual competencies) (Garside and Nhemachena, 2013; Pijl-Zieber et al., 2014a; Zibrowski et al., 2009); 4) discontinuous supervision (Sundler et al., 2014; Sweet et al., 2013); 5) inadequate guidance of developing reflective ability (Mann et al., 2009); and 6) a lack of a consistent (Pijl-Zieber et al., 2014a) and programmatic approach (van der Vleuten et al., 2012). The authors wanted to address these problems and to contribute to future competence by designing an 'Integrated Learning Assessment and Supervision Competency Framework' for clinical workplace education. Within this theoretical paper, we will describe the underpinning theoretical perspectives, and the pedagogical concepts that are

relevant in the framework. Fig. 1 shows the workplace framework and Fig. 2 illustrates the underlying workplace learning instrument.

Methods

Reviews of the relevant workplace literature and four empirical studies that were conducted during a doctoral research project resulted in the design of this framework. Two qualitative studies used a content analysis approach to explore students' and supervisors' perceptions on how this framework facilitated learning, assessment and supervision (Embo et al., 2010, 2014a). A subsequent mixed-method study explored how two reflective writing activities stimulated reflection at different degrees of granularity during workplace learning (Embo et al., 2014b). A cross-sectional and retrospective-longitudinal correlation cohort study was used to investigate the relationship between reflection and performance and how reflection contributes to development (Embo et al., 2014c). The framework was developed in the context of midwifery education at the University College Arteveldehogeschool Ghent (Belgium).

The Workplace Framework Components

We describe successively the different components of this workplace framework: 1) competency-based education and competency framework; 2) workplace stakeholders; 3) workplace learning, assessment and supervision; 4) learning and assessment instrument;

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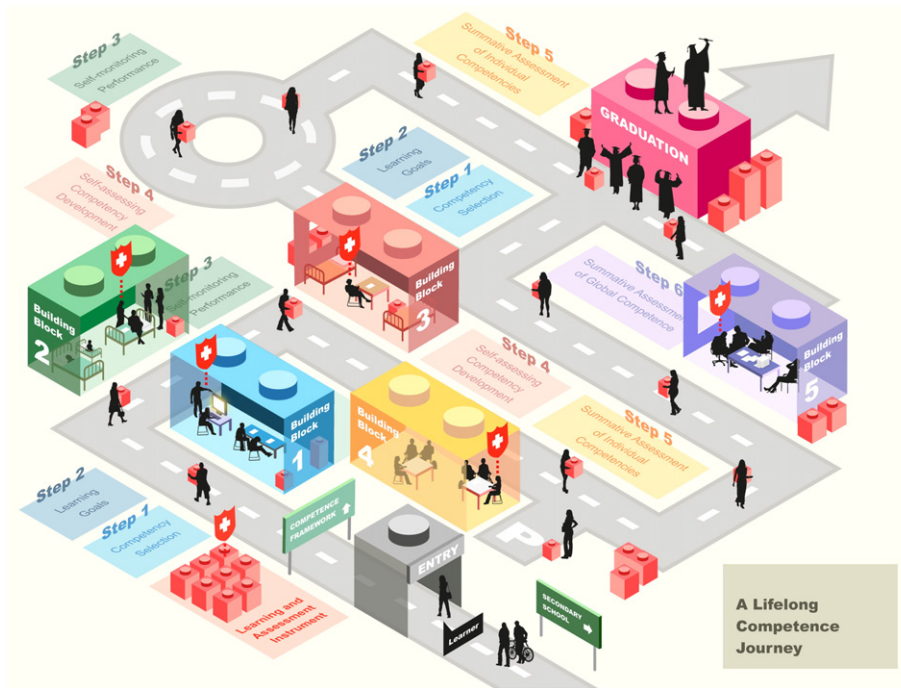


Fig. 1. Integrated Learning Assessment and Supervision Competency Framework.

5) programmatic learning and assessment; and 6) essential conditions for a successful integrated workplace learning design.

Competency-based Education and Competency Framework

The framework is embedded in a competency-based approach to clinical education. Learners start education (e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate, residency education) in order to graduate as a competent professional (e.g. nurse, midwife, doctor) fit for practice. Developing

professional competence is a lifelong learning process, rather than 'a state to be achieved' at the moment of graduation (Eraut, 1994; Garside and Nhemachena, 2013; Govaerts and van der Vleuten, 2013). We use the analogy of a Lifelong Competence Journey (Fig. 1). Competencies are learned and assessed during a programme, consisting of building blocks of in-school and workplace learning and assessment.

Competency-based education is defined as an education in which "assessments ensure that graduates have the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enter the workforce and begin functioning in

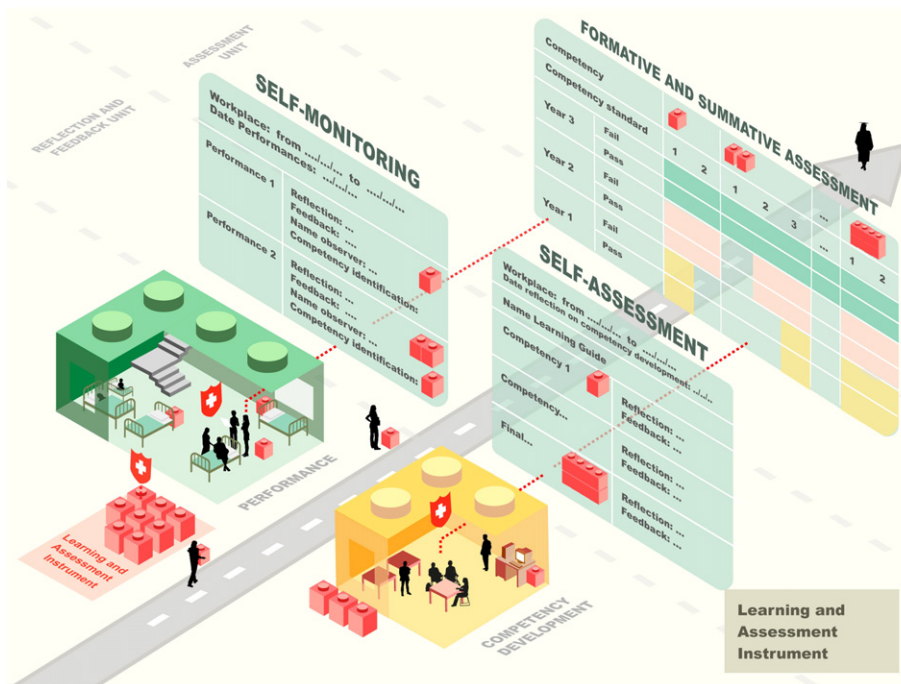


Fig. 2. Integrated learning and assessment instrument.

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