Utilising the workbook to scaffold reflective practice skills and add professional meaning for Diploma of Nursing students

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Chosen theme(s)

Program curriculum
Professional learning and accreditation

The context

This project is located at RDNS Training and Silver Chain Training, a Registered Training Organisation providing the Diploma of Nursing in both South Australia (SA) and Western Australia (WA). The majority of students and staff are located in SA and 2013 saw the commencement of delivery in WA to a small group of students.

The Diploma of Nursing is the minimum qualification for admission to the professional nursing register in Australia, and comprises 26 units taught over an 18 month period, delivered over 3 semesters. We offer rolling intakes of 4 or 5 groups each year, with up to 350 Diploma of Nursing students at different stages of the course at any one time. Only domestic students can apply and entry requirements are either completion of Year 12, Certificate III or mature age entry. The students, who are overwhelmingly female and at an average age in the early to mid 30s, present with highly varied levels of computer confidence and ability, predominantly on the lower end of the spectrum.

Study modes include classroom, online and simulated practical, plus facilitated work placements across Aged Care, Community and Acute nursing environments. The course is a generalist nursing qualification covering topics including palliative care, anatomy and physiology, chronic and acute nursing, cultural diversity, law and ethics, aged care, research and reflective practice. This Case Study primarily deals with supporting student reflective practice during placements.
External curriculum drivers

As a nationally licensed qualification the curriculum is accredited by both the Vocational Education and Training (VET) regulator and the licensing authority for nursing and midwifery in Australia (the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council, or ANMAC). This dual regulation framework compels the curriculum to address Employability Skills, a nationally endorsed set of capabilities that all nationally recognised training providers must endeavour to develop and assess in their students and graduates. In addition, the professional standards for nurses contain explicit requirements in relation to continuing professional development, and these commence from the moment of registration as a nurse. This ‘moment of registration’ is typically immediately on completion of the pre-registration course, in this instance the Diploma of Nursing, hence training providers delivering this qualification need to build the capability for their students to satisfy these requirements very early in, and continuously throughout the curriculum.

Non-regulatory external drivers include the expectation of industry and employers that nursing graduates, and increasingly student nurses on placement, can demonstrate application of reflective practice and continuing personal and professional development in a planned and systematic fashion.

Internal curriculum drivers

We undertook a review and upgrade of the curriculum in line with changes in the regulatory environment, which highlighted the need for increased rigour in the collection of evidence related to the non-technical elements of the course, such as reflective practice. The turnover of some teaching staff also introduced a change to the skill mix of the faculty, again presenting an opportunity to make changes to the curriculum.

How it was ...

In the previous HLT51607 Diploma of Nursing the students were required to produce a one page handwritten reflection in their clinical logbook for each placement. The reflection page in the clinical log book did not provide any framework to guide the student in how to write a well-constructed reflection. This approach to reflection in the Diploma did not prepare the students for a professional nursing career which embraces on-going learning based on a cycle of analysis and reflection.

In 2010, RDNS (SA) delivered an ePortfolio Implementation Trial funded by the Australian Flexible Learning Framework to investigate and identify the factors that contribute to the successful implementation of an eportfolio system which supports a learner's ability to easily move between education sectors and between job roles/industry areas. One of the outcomes of this trial is that we recognised the potential for PebblePad to add professional meaning for nursing students through application in the reflective practice element of the curriculum.
The approach

RDNS (SA) incorporated PebblePad into the curriculum during the development of the curriculum submission for the current HLT51612 Diploma of Nursing, by requiring students to undertake reflection in PebblePad after lessons and after each placement activity.

Orienting students to PebblePad

New students are given several weeks to become familiar with Moodle before starting the PebblePad orientation. As Moodle is the primary contact point with students we encourage students to log into their Moodle accounts to access our PebblePad Help Page where they can click on a hyperlink to the PebblePad installation URL and they can find all customised help guides.

In SA, the location of the majority of students, the PebblePad orientation is delivered to each group by the PebblePad Project Nurse in the Resource Centre, allowing the students to work through the customised help guides with the help of a facilitator. The commencement of the first cohort of WA students was a catalyst for the step-by-step guides to be fully developed so students could get started with only minimal support required from their educator.

The Help Guides

Some of the information in the help guides is generic but was included in the specific information for consistency. The following image is from the help guide that is specific to using the Reflective Practice Workbook.

Figure 1: Help Guide
The Reflective Practice Workbook

Delivery has centred on putting all course-based requirements in one Reflective Practice Workbook to better cater to the significant proportion of students who struggle with technology. We have taken advantage of new workbook features such as being able to change content, scaffolding the release of pages and using a collection page.

When the students encounter the workbook for the first time, it appears with only 3 pages which is a little less daunting. Before each placement only two pages are added to the workbook (e.g. Placement 1 Context and the Placement 1 Final Reflection). By the end of the 18 month course, there will be approximately 12 pages in the workbook. As each group starts at a different month of the year, the workbook is copied and renamed so that the pages are added at the right time for each group’s progress. What follows is a summary of the Reflective Practice workbook pages and their features.

Welcome page

This page clearly states the requirements of the course and has a link to the Reflection Template. Towards the end of the course the content will be changed to address preparation for professional life, such as information about the nursing CPD registration standard and how to build and share a CV which can incorporate content from the Reflective Practice Workbook.

![Figure 2: Welcome page](image-url)
Employability Skills page

At the beginning of the course each student self-rates against eight Employability Skills and then revisits their ratings after each placement. Each placement reflection prompts the student to identify which Employability Skills the reflection has related to and then revisit, update and justify their self-rating. The aim is for the students to complete their course with evidence-based high self-ratings that can be built into a CV or job application. Each of the Employability Skills is linked to the relevant professional competencies (ANMC Enrolled Nurse Competency Standards) and there is a link from each Employability Skill to a folio page which contains the ANMC Competencies.

![Employability Skills](image)

![ANMC Enrolled Nurse Competency Standards](image)

Figure 3: Employability skills
Placement Final Reflection pages for each placement

The placement final reflection page requires a placement expectation box to be completed before the placement commences, which is useful for the student in terms of looking back at how far they have come, but it also means the student can touch base with PebblePad before leaving the safety and support of the training facility.

In early iterations of the workbook, we used the What? So What? Now What? Reflection format, but we found this was more suitable for specific incidents than for a whole-of-placement reflection. The following three images show a student placement reflection response using the current reflection structure.
Placement Context pages for each placement

It is a requirement of the CPD registration standard that all Australian nurses define their context of practice every year. The placement context page prompts the student to clearly describe the type of placement they were on using a format similar to the CPD registration standard context statements to help them become comfortable with one of the requirements of their future professional registration as Enrolled Nurses. It is also an effective way to describe to potential employees the type of experiences they have gained during their Diploma course placements.

Figure 4: Placement Final Reflection

Figure 5: Placement context
**My Reflections Page**

The reflection template available from the Welcome Page is where the students are encouraged to reflect on any occurrence, either before, during or after placement. The My Reflections Collection page displays all assets tagged with ‘diploma reflection’ and the Reflection Template available from the Welcome Page is tagged with ‘diploma reflection’. The students are also reminded to relate their reflection to their employability skills.

Initially the students were encouraged to use the Community blog to begin reflecting and to keep in touch with each other during placement. The blog was used quite a lot for keeping in touch by one of the earlier groups however several students preferred to keep their reflections private. It was at this time that the collection page feature was added to the workbook which enabled us to add a tagged Reflection Template to the welcome page and set up the collection page to pick up the same tag. This has been utilised well by the students and we have received feedback that they prefer it to using the blog format.

![Reflection Template](image)

*Figure 6: My Reflections*

**How it is now ....**

From the beginning of 2013, students were required to write their reflection for each placement in PebblePad. Non-compulsory components included employability skill self-ratings and using the conversations page to reflect and keep in touch with each other during placements.

As part of the Quality and Improvement process, in 2014 the PebblePad reflection is to be added as an assessable component to the unit HLTEN508B *Apply reflective practice and critical thinking in nursing* to address the following essential skills in the unit:
• critical thinking and analysis
• professional review and skills development
• self-reflection and evaluation

This unit is delivered in Semester 1 which means the compulsory component of the PebblePad reflection will be completed in that semester. In order to encourage use of PebblePad in semesters 2 and 3, PebblePad reflection will be added to the lesson plan for every placement debrief session and third semester students will be encouraged to prepare for professional life by building their CV and learning how to fulfil the requirements of the nursing CPD registration standard using PebblePad.

The benefits

• PebblePad has become another tool in building technology confidence and competence in our students. Students have experienced a more tangible treatment of a skill previously considered quite theoretical and therefore difficult to grasp. The integration with Employability Skills and the production of evidence to support claims in a student's CV also makes the activity more relevant for students.
• PebblePad has been utilised to manage the reporting of staff CPD activities. The nurses on staff have been able to simultaneously meet the national CPD registration requirements using a specific workbook for that purpose.
• Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) support can be enhanced by matching low self-rating students in PebblePad with other LLN and course performance indicators. Using the “Add a Plan” feature of PP has helped formalise and record this support.
• PebblePad's reporting features assists educators to monitor student self-ratings over the course duration, enhancing the effectiveness of pastoral care and enabling more targeted support interventions.
• Students are better prepared to fulfil their obligations as professional nurses on graduation, particularly ongoing learning and the CPD standard.
• Overall, student learning has shown signs of improvement through better engagement with the reflective practice content, better performance in related assessments, and improved application of related skills during placements.

Lessons learnt

Due to rolling intakes it has been necessary to carefully manage the timing of all PebblePad related communication, teaching and changes to each group's workbook. This has been done by using a freeware programme called Evernote.

The educators have not engaged with PP as much as initially expected due to their high work load and the fact that I have been managing the PP component of the course. I have begun to focus more on improving educator engagement with PP which has involved development of
tailored help guides and one on one training sessions with a view to educators being able to give the students feedback on their reflections whilst they are still on placement.

It became challenging to ensure all students had reflected as required. Initially we managed this by running the ‘Members that have not yet submitted’ report from the workspace management area, however many students had shared their workbooks and then not reflected. To ensure all requirements were being met, we then had the students come into the Resource Centre during the first lesson after each placement to finalise their reflection. This provided an opportunity for the educators to read the reflections for assessment purposes and also see the other components of the workbook, whilst providing real-time feedback to the students.

We ran into a challenge when we found the computers in WA did not have flash installed. This has now been addressed by installing Flash and also developing a simple HTML format guide. We have also purchased a simple video conferencing system which has successfully enabled me to guide the WA students through how to use PP and the Reflective Practice Workbook.

In brief – personalising the curriculum

- Provide students with a personal space to record their own experience with a challenging element of the curriculum (placements)
- Integrate this personal reflection into the assessment of the course
- Provide students with a tool to build evidence in support of their CV which has delivered them stronger employment outcomes
- Have direct and private conversations with educators and other students at times of their choosing using PP