

ABSTRACT

An Evaluation of the Development and Assessment of Clinical Competence in a Radiography Programme in Trinidad and Tobago

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This study evaluated the clinical component of the radiological sciences programme offered at the College of Health Sciences, National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST) of Trinidad and Tobago. The purpose of the evaluation was to gain insight into the appropriateness and effectiveness of the clinical programme in developing and measuring competence in radiography students. A participant-oriented, responsive evaluation approach was the principal evaluation strategy. The evaluation focused on, and responded to, the realities of the clinical programme and the reactions, concerns and issues of participants (Stake, 1975) involved in this programme component.

The research work was conducted mainly in the qualitative paradigm using, among other strategies, methods of observation of a cohort of students during their clinical training and in-depth interviews with key programme stakeholders.

Programme developers perceived a variety of factors as determinants in the development of radiography competence. They conceptualized the clinical programme as multidimensional and used a variety of strategies to attain competency goals. These strategies included innovative approaches to clinical practice and assessment strategies involving non-traditional roles for the student.

Among the overall strengths of the programme was its student-centred focus which helped different types of students to take charge of their learning. Taking charge of their learning was an important factor in students' acquisition of competence, since competence is an individualized and experiential phenomenon (Eraut, 1992; Schon, 1987). Facilitating strategies in this regard, were those that provided continuous feedback and which either internally or externally motivated students to assume learning and developmental roles. Such strategies included assessment practices that were formative in purpose and function (William and Black, 1998).

The research highlights the importance of congruence between educational goals and the strategies for their achievement, and proposes a method for defining appropriate strategies that reflects current trends in professional educational thought.

Key words: Anna-May Edwards-Henry; assessment; clinical competence; competence; competence development; evaluation; participant-oriented; professional; professional education; professional training; radiography; responsive evaluation.

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