Promoting Critical Thinking Skills Through Problem-Based Learning

Haobin Yuan1*, Wipada Kunaviktikul2, Areewan Klunklin2 and Beverly A. Williams3

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to compare the critical thinking skills before and after the implementation of the problem-based learning (PBL) approach among Chinese baccalaureate nursing students and to describe students’ comments on PBL. A quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design was conducted. Through purposive sampling, twenty-three second-year baccalaureate nursing students were invited to participate in this study. PBL was used as the intervention for a one-semester course in nursing. The California Critical Thinking Skills Test Form A (CCTST-A Chinese Taiwan Version) was used to measure the critical thinking skills and was given to students at both pre-test (at the beginning of the course) and post-test (at the end of the course). A paired t-test indicated that PBL students’ critical thinking skills significantly increased over one semester (P< .05). In addition, most of the students suggested that PBL encouraged them to share their opinions with others, analyze situations in different ways and think of more possibilities for solving problems. However, a few students felt very stressed and overloaded during the PBL process. In conclusion, PBL promoted nursing students’ critical thinking skills.

Key words: Problem-based learning, Critical thinking, Chinese, Nursing students

INTRODUCTION

In a contemporary healthcare environment characterized by rapidly-changing development and relentlessly-increasing knowledge, the possession of critical thinking is essential for nurses in order to make a sound judgment when solving clinical problems (Alfaro-LeFevre, 1995).