

Using analytical frameworks in assessment to investigate the quality of generic skills achievement in pharmacy

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The ability to engage in reflective practice and argumentation are seen as important generic attributes for the professional pharmacist, and pharmacy course providers are expected to incorporate the development of these, and other generic skills, during pharmacy students' tertiary experience. This research is based on a case study of third year pharmacy students from an Australian university and the use of analytical frameworks to investigate the quality of argument and level of reflection achieved in a social pharmacy assessment activity.

The activity required students to attend a lecture on social pharmacy concepts and produce arguments in response to the following questions on drug addiction, a topic selected as the social issue for discussion:

- Is drug addiction an illness?
- Should pharmacists treat drug addicts differently from other people when they seek help in the pharmacy?

Students were asked to view a documentary on drug addiction and after viewing students were then asked to engage in argumentation again and re-visit the same two questions. Finally, students were asked to compare their responses and reflect on any perceived change and produce a reflective response to the overall activity. Student arguments were analysed using an adapted version of Toulmin's Argumentation Pattern (TAP), which allowed the structure and complexity of arguments to be assessed and analysed. The level of student reflection was analysed using a method similar to Wong et al (1995), in which a combination approach in analysing students' reflections based on Boud et al (1985) and Mezirow's (1991) model was utilised.

The majority of students demonstrated the ability to produce arguments that included data and backings to support their argument claims, but frequently did not include qualifiers. This indicated that most pharmacy students were able to provide a suitable level of justification and evidence to support a claim. The findings of the reflection analysis showed that the majority of students produced reflections that indicated they engaged in high levels of critical reflection.

This suggests that the activity was successful in engaging students in reflection and argumentation and the analytical frameworks were useful in determining the level of generic skill achieved. This may indicate the benefit of embedding such frameworks into the evaluation of assessments in the future.

References

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Conference Themes:  Standards  Practical solutions

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