AN EXPLORATION OF THE USE OF CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS TO EVALUATE HEALTH SCIENCES AND HEALTH PROFESSIONAL COURSES

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Course evaluation in dietetics education is required for internal and external quality improvement. Despite this, systematic and coordinated approaches to course evaluations that include measurement of the outcomes and impacts these programs have on developing graduate capabilities are rare. This study aimed to explore how curricula and other factors contribute to the development of entry-level competence. Using contribution analysis, key stakeholders were engaged in an iterative, theory-driven evaluation. The researchers collectively developed a postulated theory-of-change. To identify factors that contribute, evidence from existing relevant documents was extracted using documentary analysis that included the recent accreditation report, placement evaluations and graduate outcomes. Collated findings were presented to disciplinary focus groups of academic staff (n=6). The focus group discussions were used to build on and to validate the theory-of-change. Our results highlight the complexity in teaching and learning, contributed by human, organisational and curricular factors. Advances in knowledge, skills, attitudes and graduate capabilities are non-linear and integrated into curricula. Work integrated learning significantly contributes to knowledge consolidation and professional identity formation in health professional courses. Workplace culture and educator passion influence the quality of teaching and learning yet are rarely considered as evidence of impact. Capturing episodic and contextual learning moments is important for describing success and reflecting for improvement. Satisfaction was the most commonly described focus of evaluation. Evidence of impact of specific course elements on future graduate capabilities was limited. Contribution analysis may be a useful evaluation method to explore the factors that influence graduate capabilities in health-related courses.