Innovate to Educate:

A Multi-Station Capstone Simulation to Develop Leadership Skills in Internationally Educated Nurses

Internationally educated nurses undertaking UK degree top-up programmes complete theory-only modules without clinical placement, limiting opportunities to apply leadership and management concepts in practice. Simulation-based education (SBE) offers an effective strategy to bridge this gap, with evidence demonstrating improvements in delegation, communication, decision-making and collaborative problem-solving (Labrague, 2021; Cant and Cooper, 2020). Active, experiential learning approaches have been shown to strengthen clinical judgement and leadership capability more effectively than didactic teaching alone (Foronda et al., 2020), particularly through simulation-based approaches that enhance decision-making, teamwork and confidence. Despite this evidence, leadership-focused capstone simulations remain under-utilised in top-up nursing programmes.

This paper presents an innovative capstone leadership and management simulation designed for internationally educated nurses at the end of a lecture-based theory block. The aim was to provide an engaging, practice-based learning experience that consolidated module content and supported transition into UK leadership expectations. Using principles from the INACSL Standards of Best Practice: Simulation Design and aligned with NMC (2018) proficiencies, a low-fidelity, multi-station table-top simulation was delivered in the university's simulation centre. Students began in Classroom A and rotated through five timed stations, each presenting a leadership-focused puzzle revising key module topics such as delegation, prioritisation, conflict management, emotional intelligence and decision-making. Up to two optional clues per station supported progression while maintaining cognitive challenge. Minimal facilitation was required, with one lecturer overseeing timing and flow. A competitive structure, rewarding the fastest team, enhanced engagement, motivation and teamwork. The simulation concluded with a whole-class structured debrief (PEARLS), enabling guided reflection on leadership behaviours, communication strategies and UK professional expectations.

Participants reported increased confidence in leadership skills and valued the opportunity to apply theory in a practice-based environment. The multi-room, puzzle-based format was described as engaging, memorable and more reflective of real-world leadership pressures than classroom teaching. This low-resource, high-impact approach aligns with the *Innovate to Educate* agenda and supports wider adoption of leadership-focused simulation within undergraduate and top-up nursing programmes.

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