Title:
Authentic and Collaborative Project-Based Learning: A Model for Teaching Evidence-Based Practice Focused Graduate Capstone Online

Carole D. Liske, PhD, MSN, BSN
College of Health Professions, Western Governors University, Bristol, IL, USA
Traci J. Starkey, PhD, MSN, BSN
College of Health Professions, Western Governors University, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, USA
M. Elizabeth Register, PhD, MSN, MPH
College of Health Professions, Western Governors University, Cedar Key, FL, USA

Session Title:
Using Evidence to Further Nursing Education
Slot:
A 05: Friday, April 8, 2016: 10:45 AM-12:00 PM
Scheduled Time:
11:25 AM

Keywords:
Authentic and collaborative project-based online learning, Competency-based project-based online learning and Evidence-based practice focused online Capstone course

References:

Abstract Summary:
An authentic collaborative project-based learning module integrated in a competency based nursing course took a radical departure from the traditional primary research focused approach. Student outcome measures indicated a profound change in student attitudes towards course content, online technologies, teamwork, and nursing practice.

Learning Activity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Articulate the theoretical underpinnings of authentic and collaborative project-based online learning</td>
<td>I. Online Learning a. Theoretical underpinnings b. Best practices c. Innovative learning strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Describe EBP course design and teaching strategies for diverse, student learning needs</td>
<td>II. EBP Graduate Course Design and Teaching Strategies a. Project-based course design b. Collaborative mentoring-preceptor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Describe the affective outcomes of authentic project-based learning

Outcomes of Authentic Project-Based Learning
a. Sense of connectedness
b. Enhanced collaboration and creativity
c. Global Implications

Abstract Text:

Taking a radical departure from the traditional primary research focused Capstone and implementing an authentic and collaborative competency-based project-focused online nursing Capstone can result in a profound change in student attitudes towards course content, online technologies, teamwork, and nursing practice (Barkley, 2014; Parker, 2013).

This presentation will examine an innovative, project-based online Capstone course designed for graduate nursing students in leadership and management and education specialties. The curricular design departed from the traditional, primary research focused Capstone to an EBP focused Capstone. This course is offered in a graduate program that serves a diverse student population of working registered nurses with various learning needs.

The revised course andragogy was based upon the theoretical underpinnings of the best practices around design and delivery of the most successful, online learning strategies (Conrad, 2011). Online learning enhances authenticity and enriches the academic experience (Parker, 2013). Online courses allow students to maintain a life/work balance that facilitates social connectedness in the virtual environment, promotes perseverance, and leads to increased student satisfaction (Hart, 2012; Ward-Smith, Schmer, Peterson, & Hart, 2013). An authentic, project-based graduate nursing course that focuses on implementing an evidence-based practice change, quality improvement, or innovation project in the clinical setting can enhance autonomy, professional growth, and lead to improved student and patient outcomes (Boss, 2015; Melnyk & Fineout-Overholt, 2015).

This course provides students a hands-on, real world experience that involves the student working with a preceptor to implement an evidence-based project change, quality improvement, or innovation that aligns with their specialty track. Course mentors (graduate nursing faculty) skillfully constructed a course of study that engages working adults in a collaborative learning experience where resources are leveraged to match student needs in order to maximize achievement of academic outcomes. Through ongoing course mentor support and mobilization of extrinsic resources, students gain a better understanding of organizational systems and how to embrace the role of change-leaders within these complex healthcare environments.

Intense student-student, student-mentor, and student-preceptor interactions are supported by multiple communication technologies such as web conferencing, cohorts, emails, short video recordings, and telephone conversations. Student reflections reveal that the authenticity of the project-based learning course creates a deep sense of connectedness between the students, preceptors, stakeholders, and course mentors and “brings out the best in each learner.” Students learn to work collaboratively, think creatively, and move beyond their comfort zone. They also report a new awareness of the complexity of healthcare systems that has transformed their nursing practice and their role as a nurse leader/educator within their organization.