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ePortfolios: Collect and Reflect as Students Transition Into Professional Practice

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ABSTRACT

Nursing educators continue to integrate technology in teaching strategies to enhance and sustain learning and student engagement. Incorporating the use of ePortfolios in nursing education is one such example. ePortfolios provide students with an organized structure to showcase their best work and develop the skill of reflection to bridge gaps between theory and practice (Karsten, 2017). Nursing students are able to demonstrate their professional transformation via their ePortfolio as evidenced by a matrix of knowledge and competency skills that include improved oral and written communication, critical thinking, creativity, innovation, research, interprofessional collaboration, evidence-based practice, primary and critical care, information processing and management. Nursing students' ePortfolios are viewed as an assembly of artifacts accumulated throughout their education (Birks, Hartin, Woods, Emmanuel, & Hitchins, 2016). Other than being an effective tool for reflective learning, ePortfolios are used to display students' competence, knowledge, skill level, and values to prospective employers or when students decide to pursue graduate educational degrees in the future to expand their marketability. Additionally, ePortfolios serve as a repository of students' work, memorializing highlights of their professional growth and development (Garrett, MacPhee, & Jackson, 2012).

Nursing students enter a baccalaureate program focusing solely on becoming a "nurse." In our integrative curriculum, students begin to build their ePortfolio in the semester just before completing all the general education prerequisites and when they begin to enroll in actual nursing courses (Riden & Buckley, 2016). As students complete every semester, they add evidences of coursework into their ePortfolios where connections between classroom and clinical learning are integrated into the real world using self-reflection. Pedagogical uses of ePortfolio include student-centered learning, curricular appreciation and integration, collaboration, mindfulness, reflective thinking and synthesis (Green, Wyllie, & Jackson, 2013).

ePortfolios provide students the structure and opportunity to organize, reflect, and find meaning in their educational pursuit of a baccalaureate degree in nursing. The purpose of this present study is to describe the effectiveness of integrative learning and its benefits to identifying student's self-awareness using their ePortfolios in terms of their respective transformation prior to beginning professional nursing practice.

Using a quantitative descriptive design, senior baccalaureate nursing students from an accredited nursing program were surveyed during their senior semester with regards the use of ePortfolios relative to their learning and preparation to nursing practice. The instrument was designed using the concepts of integrative and reflective learning as well as the structure and technological features of the ePortfolio. There is descriptive evidence from the survey data that students found the structure and technological elements of the ePortfolio to be intuitive and straightforward. Additionally, student-respondents admitted that the development and use of ePortfolios encouraged them to identify their strengths and weaknesses, consequently helping them to draft development plans to further enhance their professional potential (Rosetti et al., 2012). From a pedagogical perspective, 86 percent of the students responded that the ePortfolio helped them to reflect on their education, professional accomplishments, and educational success. Students reported that self-reflection in the integrative curriculum was helpful in developing their sense of identity as a nurse. Students also shared about feeling proud of their accomplishments and pleased with displaying their achievements in the form of an ePortfolio. Less than 20 percent of students

reported minor issues using the ePortfolio (Andrews & Cole, 2015), e.g. flexibility in the ePortfolio design and preference for other forms of artifacts.

Overall, the development and use of ePortfolios enhanced students' learning and preparation for professional practice was positive. Its structure and technological aspects were weighed in by the students to be simple to learn and use, and included many benefits to assist them achieve knowledge, skills and preparation to becoming future nurses. Reflective learning in an integrative curriculum provided support in developing their critical thinking, evidence-based practice, mindfulness, positive attitudes and values towards nursing, other healthcare professionals and staff, and most importantly, the patients they care for. This study generated evidence that the use of ePortfolio's in baccalaureate nursing education demonstrates best practice for reflective learning.

Title:

ePortfolios: Collect and Reflect as Students Transition Into Professional Practice

Keywords:

Integrative curriculum, Reflective Learning and ePortfolio

References:

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Abstract Summary:

The development and use of ePortfolios enhanced students' reflective learning and preparation for professional practice. Its structure and technological aspects supports critical thinking, knowledge and a positive sense of identity. This study generated evidence that the use of ePortfolio's in baccalaureate nursing education demonstrates best practice for reflective learning.

Content Outline:

Introduction

- Describe the technology used and the development of an ePortfolio in baccalaureate nursing education
- Discuss the study outcomes and benefits of ePortfolio to students in preparation for professional practice

Body

- A. Main Point #1 Pedagogical use of ePortfolio
 1. Supporting point #1 Bridge the gaps between theory and practice
 - a. Discuss matrix of knowledge and competency skills improved oral and written communication, information processing etc.
 - b. Demonstrate critical thinking , creativity, innovation
 2. Supporting point #2 Building an ePortfolio
 - a. Making connections between course work and the real world
 - b. Challenges in developing the ePortfolio platform, collecting and defining artifacts. EPortfolios are structures for students to organize and showcase their best work
- B. Main Point #2 Disucss Reflective Learning
 1. Supporting Point #1
 - a. Describe benefits of *reflective thinking and learning*
 - b. Disucss the Integrative curriculum and how ePortfolios were implemented and how students became self –aware of their learning, appreciation and, integration
 2. Supporting Point #2
 - a. Students develop a respective transformation prior to beginning professional nursing practice
 - b. Utilizing the ePortfolio students take the opportunity to collect and reflect therefore appreciating and synthesize their knowledge
- C. Main Point #3 Study Design, Implementation and Outcomes
 1. Supporting Point #1
 - a. Quantitative descriptive design, voluntary sample of senior baccalaureate nursing students
 - b. Instrument was designed using the concepts of integrative and reflective learning as well as structure and technological skills
 2. Supporting Point #2
 - a. Discussion of results: Students self-identified strengths and weaknesses and made plans for self-improvements
 - b. Overall study outcomes were positive the development and use of ePortfolios enhanced students' learning

Conclusion

- I. This study revealed students found the development of an ePortfolio easy to create intuitive and straightforward. Also the ePortfolio was beneficial for students to reflect on their education, professional accomplishments and educational success as well as helping to develop a positive sense of identity as a nurse. Positive learning outcomes were achieved and the study generated
- II. Positive learning outcomes were achieved and the study generated evidence that the use of ePortfolios in baccalaureate nursing education demonstrates best practice for reflective learning.

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