Keywords: Professional development, Reflective practitioner and Scholarship

Description/Overview:
This paper about the author’s reflection of the journey in her nursing career, aims to share with nurses, at different levels of their career, about self-actualization and professional development. This paper documents how she dealt with the challenges. One also needs to be a reflective practitioner as a faculty member.

Abstract Text:
Many universities share a similar mission statement about contributing to society through the pursuit of education, learning, and research, not only at the international level, but at a standard of excellence at that level. In joining academia, an individual can be said to be making an implicit commitment to such aspire to such an ideal. However, the pursuit of personal and professional development in the tertiary education sector is filled with challenges. The aim of this paper is to share with participants at different levels of their career the author's reflections on her own nursing career, with specific reference to the themes of self-actualization and professional development as a faculty member.

In academia, the focus is on novelty, cutting-edge knowledge, and global visibility. The attributes of a modern-day scholar include: the conducting of research that is of significance and has impact; the production of quality publications – the more the better; the achievement of visibility in the international scene, and the making of contributions to the profession or community. As scientists, do we pursue fields of study where funding is available, or do we pursue what we believe to be important areas in human healthcare, even though these areas may not currently be hot topics of research? When we work in an environment where the appraisal of our performance is based on the amount of grant money that we have secured and the number of high-impact publications that we have produced, do we opt for faster and easier paths to reach these targets, or do we insist on rigor in science, which is highly time-consuming? While cutting-edge science is indeed crucial for human advancement, do people with health concerns really need cutting-edge science in their daily lives? As nurse scientists, do we always need cutting-edge science to help our patients? How should scholars/scientists situate themselves inside the ivory tower and move forward? How much time and effort do we spend in writing grants and conducting research, and how much time and effort should be spent on teaching and helping students learn? While trying to become internationally known for the work that we do and spending enormous amounts of energy in establishing global networks, are we paying sufficient attention to contributing to the local scene? Given the constraints that we face in academia, do we focus on our own work or do we still find time to nurture the next generation of nurse leaders? A nurse academic is constantly faced with such questions, choices, and decisions.

This paper reports how the author dealt with her own challenges and struggles. The story about the kind of scholar/scientist/practitioner that she is, is a story about how she made her decisions over the years. The key attributes of a scholar/scientist, first and foremost, is to be a reflective ‘practitioner’ (as an academic/faculty member). Such a person needs to have genuine passion about his/her own aspirations, be accepting of challenges and willing to make a commit to the field, and to refuse to give up even in the face of repeated failures. It is necessary to accept one’s own weaknesses and limitations, and to keep trying to amend them. Our actions define who we are, and being true to oneself and persevering over time are the ingredients for success. Maturity in personal and career development are lifelong processes and there are no shortcuts. The development of an individual’s career over time can be likened to the production of a piece of craftwork. In striving for advancements in scholarship and recognition for our special contributions to the profession and society, we need to know that much hard work and reflection is needed to pave the way to the creation of a beautiful piece of craftwork.
Content Outline:
Introduction
Academic life is filled with challenges. This paper contains the author's reflections on her own development as a nurse scholar over the past two decades.

Body

1. Challenges in academic life
   o Universities focus on the development of cutting-edge knowledge, but in real life the health needs of people do not always require cutting-edge knowledge
   o Success in securing funding and having 'high impact' publications dominates the life of a faculty member
   o There are no fast returns in scientific work, but academics are expected to produce output that has a quick impact
   o The current milieu does not favor negative findings in research, but science is supposedly about discovering 'facts/truths' about the world Thus, it is no easy feat for someone engaged in the field of nursing to choose a career in academia.

2. The author's path to growth and development as a faculty member.
   o One’s own beliefs and values as signposts
   o Commitment to one’s own goals and aspirations
   o Positive thinking, believing in people, and giving people a chance
   o Perseverance will eventually pay off

It is just as important to be a reflective ‘practitioner’ in academia.

Conclusion
A scholar/scientist also needs to be a reflective ‘practitioner’ in his/her academic career in order to attain personal and professional growth.
Professional Experience: 2018 Jan - Jun -- Part-time faculty, School of Health Sciences, Macao Polytechnic Institute 2017 Sep - Present -- Visiting Professor, School of Nursing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University 2017 Feb- Apr -- Project Professor, Division of Health Sciences and Nursing, Graduate School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, The University of Tokyo 2017 - present -- Honorary Professor, School of Nursing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University 2010 - 2016 -- Professor, School of Nursing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University 2004 - 2014 -- Associate Professor, School of Nursing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University 1996 - 2004 -- Assistant Professor, School of Nursing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University 2002 - 2003 -- Examiner, Nursing Council of Hong Kong 1999 - present -- Clinical Assessor, Nursing Council of Hong Kong 1996 -- Clinical Nursing Specialist, Baycrest Hospital, Baycrest Center for Geriatric Care, Toronto, Canada

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