**Reflection Paper**

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**Introduction**

Nursing profession is multifaceted with many options. Continuing education is vital to remain current with the changes that happen in the nursing practice. Improved patient health outcomes can only be realized through continuing nursing education and skills. Continuing education could substantially enhance the quality and safety of patient care due to a greater knowledge on new or emerging healthcare problems. As a nurse, it is this writer’s responsibility to advance on nursing education to deliver quality and safe nursing care to patients or the populace. This reflective article will analyze the importance of nursing educational advancement and pinpoint or identify the overall educational ambitions of the author.

**Nursing Job Opportunities by Education Level**

Getting a Bachelor of Science in nursing (BSN), would benefit the writer with additional opportunities in the discipline of nursing. Nurses with advance nursing degrees have a competitive advantage over those with lower degrees such as associate degree in nursing. The nursing work marketplace is presently swerving towards the employment of BSN-prepared nurses. Gaining a BSN would allow nurses to multiply their career prospects. Bachelor of Science in Nursing is a bridge to advance nursing education. With the BSN, the author would be able to expand his profession in many possibilities. The writer could further his education to earn him the position of a nurse manager. Nurse manager requires advance skills and abilities to supervise the entire health care team. Becoming a community or public health nurse could be an option after the writer earns a BSN. Community health nurses provide treatment to the entire populace. Those nurses advocate for the health and disease prevention in public settings. After the completion of the BSN, the author could work as a clinical research nurse. BSN syllabus provides the basic knowledge needed to function as a clinical research nurse, with certification options available to get more specific skills (Erstad, 2018). Finally, a nurse educator could be a valuable nursing leader role to engage in after completion of the BSN. Educating nurses can be a brilliant opportunity to transmit to the future nurses (Erstad, 2018).

**The Purpose for Advancing Nursing Education**

To make progress in the nursing profession, the writer must continue to advance his level of education. After the completion of BSN program, the author plans to go on with his Master of Science in Nursing (MSN). The Bureau of Labor Statistics envisage that the outlook for those nurses with MSN is relatively positive. Earning a Master of Science in Nursing can result to various employment opportunities and fairer salaries. The nursing job market is better with increase in the level of education. MSN-prepared nurses provide direct patient care at an improved level, carry out research, teach both online and in traditional lecture hall, influence public policy, lead healthcare teams, consult with organizations, and apply evidence-based solutions that transform or modernize health care. The writer plans to take a short break after BSN completion, but the ultimate plan is to earn a DNP. The author foresees that this goal could be achieved within five years period. The duration of time anticipated to complete the DNP study could be determined by the amount of time the author will spend for a break from school, the availability of the program and its enrollment period. To the author, the motivation for pursuing DNP is to practice without physician oversight as a healthcare provider and to produce innovative technical and clinical skills in the healthcare field in general (Gaines, 2019).

**Influence of Educational Level on Competitiveness in the Nursing Market**

Further education prepares an individual with innovative skills and knowledge that can be utilized to contribute or share with others and enhances self-esteem and positive effects on other aspects of one’s life. The demand for nurses is consistently rising because of the shortage of nursing graduates and an increase in nurse turnovers. Today’s nursing job market is challenging due to competitiveness. Getting a Bachelor of Science in nursing gives this writer an advantage to vast excellent opportunities in the various nursing options. Earning a BSN and further nursing education would allow this author to gain improved knowledge as well as stay or remain competitive in the job market (Childers, n. d.). Holding an advanced degree is rewarding over a minor degree such as ADN. Also, proficiency or experience is very important to boost competitiveness for high profile nursing positions or jobs. Therefore, nurses must continue to practice and advance their education concurrently. Nurses are called to take up primary care responsibilities to help patients cope with chronic ailment, prevent critical care incidences, and disease progress (The National Academies of Press [NAP], 2011). Per American Association of American Medical Colleges, the country is facing challenges of shortage of medical doctors projected between 40,800 and 104,900 medical doctors by 2030 and some opinions suggest that having more nurse practitioners working at their complete potentials could resolve this problem (Childers, n. d.). There is a high need for collaboration between the nurses and medical doctors to provide excellent patient care to different people in the future. Advancing their education ensures that they take leadership roles, influence health care policies, and practice to the complete scope of their training as defined by the 2011 IOM report.

**Continuing Nursing Education and Standards for Practice**

Lifelong nursing education is crucial to staying current in the nursing practice. Nurses must cultivate positive mindsets towards learning. Staying up to date with new knowledge opens new doors for good job opportunities, promotion, and valuable salaries for nurses. For every nurse to become a lifelong learner, it must involves gaining advance knowledge and skills through continuing education units (CEUs) as well as exploring research and achieving advanced practice certifications in certain specialty areas (Thomas, 2018). Continuous education could be completed in a multiplicity of settings, and it is tied with the granting of Licenses. In a health care setting, it can be achieved with annual skill evaluation. Most clinical settings evaluate annual proficiency to update their nurses with clinical practices. The essence of CEUs is to refresh and update the nursing workforce on the newest evidence-based practice procedures to enhance patient care outcomes (Thomas, 2018). Continuing education for nurses through an advanced education system was one of the IOM’s recommendation messages (NAP, 2011). Nursing texts revealed that continuing education is a fundamental element of professionalism in nursing and can help in organizing the nursing function (Eslamian, J. et al., 2015). The organization of Seminars, training, and conferences can boost professional growth and empower the nurses. Continuing education involves planned learning experiences to improve the nurse’s mindsets, skills, and knowledge thereby promoting nurse’s role and care plan in the community (Eslamian, J. et al., 2015). Nurses must practice within the scope of nursing practice of their States. They are responsible to understanding their State practice Acts, regulations, policies, and processes.

**Continuing Nursing Education**

Continuing nursing education should be mandated for all nurses. Continuing education units update the nurses with new knowledge to care for their patients. Continuing education is a laudable approach to develop new skills or knowledge necessary for professional transition (Loveless, 2020). To achieve continuous education, nurses are not required to return to college or university. Continuous education can be earned through special certifications, research articles, clinics, webinars, and quizzes. The nurse core role is focused on caring for humans, so it is vital to invest in continuing education to improve the nurse’s competency in the organizations (Eslamian, J. et al., 2015). Nevertheless, returning to university for advanced education should be the decision of the nurses. Many factors contribute for nurses to earn higher education achievements such as employment, family factor, motivation, and cost of education. Health care groups should incentivize nurses to advance their education.

**Conclusion**

Nurses must continue with their education to provide complex care to the patient or populations. Continuing nursing education to expand knowledge, skill, and attitude can improve nursing activity and health care in the community (Eslamian, J. et al., 2015). Superior nursing education can lead to improved patient outcomes and advancement in nursing practice. Continuing with advance nursing education would allow the author to earn a DNP and practice to the full potential of his education without physician oversight.

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