



# **ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING IN STUDENT NURSES THROUGH REFLECTION**

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# DESCRIPTION:

## WHAT IS REFLECTION?

- Dewey (1933) first introduced the idea of reflection and its importance to critical thinking.
  - “Reflection is the turning over of a subject in the mind and giving it serious consecutive consideration” (p.3).
- Reflective thinking is an ongoing process that encompasses a critical analysis of a practitioner’s actions, decision making and thought process during and after a clinical situation (Langley & Brown, 2010).
- Reflective practice has been linked to increased learning, enhanced self-esteem, improved critical thinking and judgment, and promoted a greater self-awareness thereby improving practice (Ruth-Sahd, 2003).



## DESCRIPTION:

### WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

- Critical thinking as a process of reflective thinking that goes beyond logical reasoning to evaluate the rationality and justification for actions within context.
- It is a thinking process focused not on achievement of the answers, but on achievement of a coherent understanding within the context of a situation.

(Forneris and Peden-McAlpine, 2007)



## DESCRIPTION:

# IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING STUDENT NURSES' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

- Nursing practice and patient outcomes depend on prepared nurses who can critically think and make quality clinical judgments; without these thinking skills nursing care at best may be suboptimal and greatly affect patient outcomes (Forneris & Peden-McAlpine, 2007).
- Nursing is a challenging, complex, and culturally diverse hands-on profession that requires astute use of critical thinking, decision-making and problem-solving skills in practice
  - Developing student nurses' critical thinking skills is a necessity to the nursing profession (Chabeli, 2007).



## DESCRIPTION:

# IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING STUDENT NURSES' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

- Critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills are necessary for all graduate nurses because these skills are necessary for practice in the ever-changing and complex health care environment (Lasater & Nielson, 2009).



## DESCRIPTION:

# THE USE OF REFLECTION IN NURSING EDUCATION TO ENHANCE CRITICAL THINKING

- Implementing learning activities that promote critical thinking is an essential element of nursing education (Forneris & Peden-McAlpine, 2007).
- Nurse educators can facilitate development of critical thinking through the use of reflective journaling.
- According to Billings and Halstead (2009) reflective journaling is an effective method to enhance and evaluate critical thinking.



## DESCRIPTION:

# THE USE OF REFLECTION IN NURSING EDUCATION TO ENHANCE CRITICAL THINKING

- Reflective writing encourages student nurses to explore more subtle aspects and deeper meanings of a given situation (Taylor-Haslip, 2010).
- Reflective journaling can be linked to the academic success of nursing students in the clinical area (Taylor-Haslip, 2012).
- Guided reflective journaling provides nursing students with structure that helps them make more in-depth descriptions of clinical experiences and their thinking about those situations which facilitates in the development of critical thinking skills (Nielson, Stragnell, & Jester, 2007).



# MEASUREMENT AND ASSESSMENT: REFLECTIVE JOURNALING

- In nursing education, evaluating students' reflective journals and providing feedback is an important aspect in promoting critical thinking as well as academic and professional growth.
- Faculty feedback provides students with formative evaluation on thinking about their experiences and support for future learning (Nielson et al., 2007).



# MEASUREMENT AND ASSESSMENT: REFLECTIVE JOURNALING

- One method that has been used to assess and evaluate nursing students progress and performance in using reflective journals is the Lasater Clinical Judgment Rubric.
- In evaluating reflective journals, Lasater and Nielson (2009) found the Lasater Clinical Judgment Rubric to offer:
  - Performance expectations → Guide for Development,
  - Language for feedback,
  - Assessment of student's clinical judgment,
  - Improved evaluation of critical thinking,
  - Enhanced communication about clinical judgment



# IMPLICATION FOR LEARNERS, EDUCATORS, AND HEALTH CARE: LEARNERS

- Reflective journaling:
  - Increases student engagement as an active participant in the learning process
  - Directs students to increase their knowledge to provide them with a better understanding of course content
  - Enhances their knowledge and critical thinking development
  - Reinforces theoretical information
  - Enhances self-esteem
  - Promotes a greater self-awareness
- Ultimately reflective journaling increases a student's clinical and theory based performances required to be a competent practitioner

(Langley & Brown, 2010; Taylor-Haslip, 2010)



# IMPLICATION FOR LEARNERS, EDUCATORS, AND HEALTH CARE:

## EDUCATORS

- Using reflective journaling, faculty are able to better observe students' professional and academic progression.
- Reflective journaling enhances communication between faculty and student (Langley & Brown, 2010)
- It is imperative for nurse educators to provide guidance in using reflection
  - Students are more successful in developing reflection and improving their critical thinking skills when educators provide guidance in the reflective process (Nielson, Stragnell, & Jester, 2007).



# IMPLICATION FOR LEARNERS, EDUCATORS, AND HEALTH CARE:

## HEALTH CARE

- Incorporating reflective practice into nursing education is considered an effective method for nursing students to analyze nursing practice, fostering not only an understanding of nurses' work, but also the development of critical thinking that is essential for providing care in complex environments (Taylor-Haslip, 2010).
- Nursing practice and patient outcomes are improved by nurses' ability to make good clinical judgments through critical thinking.



# CURRENT RESEARCH: REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

- Bartlett et al. (2008) found that reflective journaling overtime assisted in improving creative, critical thinking skills in nursing students.
- Nielson, Stragnell, and Jester (2007) conducted study using guided reflective journaling in a baccalaureate nursing program.
  - The researchers found guided reflective journaling:
    - Helped students to more accurately track clinical judgment progress
    - Helped students to honestly reflect and self-assess performance during clinical
    - Assisted students' in developing rationale for interventions
    - Helped faculty more easily observe development of clinical judgment
    - Increased faculty's ability to uncover misunderstandings or missed connections
    - Assisted faculty in identifying and providing support to student's who were struggling with clinical judgment (Nielson, et al., 2007)



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFLECTION IN PRACTICE

- Reflection is a life-long process, incorporating the continued use of reflective practice will facilitate lifelong learning and will enable nurses, nurse educators, and student nurses to move along the continuum of continued professional competence (Thomas, Baker, Pope, Latham, & Mededji, 2010).
- Further research needs to be developed in order to determine the most effective way to use reflection to build critical thinking skills in nursing students.



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