Chapter 2
The Experts in Design of Distance Nursing Education

Belgin Boz Yuksekdag
Anadolu University Turkey

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the author answer the question, How should the experts approach the design of distance nursing education? In this context, firstly, the chapter focuses on the importance of continuity of education and distance education for nurses. Secondly, it discusses the design of distance nursing education programs and the issues to be taken into account by experts. Thirdly, it explains the issues that need to be addressed in distance nursing education such as transition from teacher-centered approach to learner-centered approach, learning styles of learners, technology, interaction, presentation of content, and support services. Lastly, the chapter offers solutions and suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

Because of the emergence of new diseases and treatment options, the nurses must update their knowledge to understand health problems, and to determine the appropriate intervention. After the graduation, nurses have aneccessity to keep up to date on significant changes in the field of health (Lombardi, Sutphen, & Day, 2013). Therefore, the nurses should follow the studies and developments in health, and they should reflect the results of studies and developments to the application environments. To accomplish this, they must continue their formal education. However; because of time limitation, geographic distance and working conditions, the nurses cannot continue education (Atack, 2003). In this context, distance nursing education programs provide them higher education opportunities. To meet the needs of the nurse-learners require the experts who including designers, administrators, nursing faculty, people who prepare content and instructors should rethink delivery strategies and instructional methods. Because of its effectiveness, many educational institutions choose distance education. Learners develop and improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities provided by distance education (Assareha & Hosseini Bidokhtb, 2010). Distance education is defined as planned learning that occurs in a different place from teaching, requiring interactive technology in real time or off time, and a course design supported by distance edu-

cation (Escoffery, Miner, & Alperin, 2003). Distance nursing programs are vitally important especially for nurses who live in rural areas and work rotating shifts (Moore & Hart, 2004). Thus, the nurses prefer the flexible distance nursing programs to get degree completion, skill acquisition, continuious education, and certificate nursing education (Buxton, 2004).

BACKGROUND

The goal of distance nursing education is to provide learners an enriched learning experience equivalent to the formal nursing education (White, 2006). The nursing practice necessitates to combine what nurse learners learn in different fields. In one field, the learners get education/information on nursing, consisting of knowledge from nursing science, natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences. In the other field, the learners learn to reason the changes in a patient's condition in time and conduct the know-how they need to be skilled of. In another field, they learn the values, behaviors, standards, social roles, fundamental purposes, and responsibilities towards nursing (Lombardiet al., 2013). The above mentioned knowledge and skills in fields must be imparted to learners in formal or/and distance nursing education.

Most educators think that learning-by-doing is the most effective way to learn. Due to the emergence of new technological tools, educators can offer learners an enriched learning experience based on experimentation and action. The Internet and a variety of communication, visualization, and simulation technologies can gain to the nurse-learners knowledge towards nursing (Lombardi, 2007). Kenny (2002) stated that the distance nursing courses were given greater independency and responsibility defining and fullfillling of learning objectives and requirements to nurses.

Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, and Day (2010) stated that nurse educators must commit to significant changes in teaching strategies and pedagogies to convert nursing education. The significant changes will require crucial dependence on the part of nursing community consist of nurses, nursing administrators, faculty, preceptors, and students. Also, these changes will require shifting approaches, attitudes, assumptions, and goals for nursing education (Lombardi et al., 2013).

THE DESIGN OF DISTANCE NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND IMPORTANCE ISSUES FOR EXPERTS

Benner et al. (2010) stated that the experts should make some fundamental shifts in teaching and learning practices:

- They must help learners in learning how to use the nursing knowledge presented in classes, during simulations and in the clinical setting.
- They could prevent division between theoretical education and practice. They should combine the theoretical and clinical learning, in this way the gap between theoretical education and practice can be closed.
- They should provide a stress on clinical reasoning and multiple ways of thinking that include critical thinking.
- They should do an emphasis on creation. The creation of new nurses is connected to their internal identification with the values of nursing practice.

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