



Getting the most from a Distance DNP Education: DNP Graduates Affecting Changes in Quality Health Care through Leadership and Health Policy

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Purpose

DNP students can be effectively guided through distance education teaching modalities to affect change in improved quality health care, leadership and health policy.

Background

Teaching students at a distance has both benefits and challenges. Students often identify convenience and flexibility as the most important benefits. Education can occur at various times and locations conducive to professional and personal schedules. Challenges often center around promoting a cohesive network of teachers and learners. Students learn better when a strong social and teaching presence is evident in the curriculum.

Community of Inquiry (COI)

An educational community of inquiry is a group of individuals who collaboratively engage in purposeful critical discourse and reflection to construct personal meaning and confirm mutual understanding.

Theoretical framework represents:

- A process of creating a deep and meaningful (collaborative-constructivist) experience
- Learning through the development of three interdependent elements – social, cognitive and teaching presence
- Diversity impact
- Collaborative efforts between faculty and students
- Dialogue related to social issues
- Faculty mentoring and sharing scholarly activities



Figure 1. Community of Inquiry

| Social | Teaching | Cognitive |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Forums | Forums | Forums |
| Student Sharing | Student Sharing | Student Sharing |
| Blackboard Collaborate | Blackboard Collaborate | Blackboard Collaborate |
| Student Presentations | Student Presentations | Student Presentations |
| Skype | Skype | Skype |
| Blog | Blog | Blog |
| Media PSA | Media PSA | Media PSA |
| Phone Conferences | Phone Conferences | Phone Conferences |
| Facebook | Reflection | Reflection |
| | Podcast | Podcast |
| | | Web Search |

Table 1. Learning Presences

Learning Presences

Social Presence

The ability to identify with the community and the ability to communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and to develop inter-personal relationships by way of projecting individual personalities (Garrison, 2009)

- The degree to which learners feel socially and emotionally connected with others in an online environment

Teaching Presence

The design, facilitation and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, & Archer, 2001)

- How the faculty facilitate the course
- How faculty interact with the students and get students to interact with faculty and other students
- The activities/assignments that faculty develop to facilitate student learning

Cognitive Presence

The extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through ongoing interactions

- Faculty to student
- Student to student
- Student to faculty

Impact

Quality Healthcare through Leadership

- Evidence-based toolkits
- Design of educational workshops
- Design of algorithm for evidence-based care
- Integration of simulation into education programs
- Establish worksite wellness programs
- Establish obstetrical triage services in hospital
- Formation of clinics in rural underserved areas
- Health promotion for children, women, men and families
- Design of Continuing Medical Education programs
- Design and implementation of online data collection

Quality Healthcare through Health Policy

- Implementation of National guidelines into clinical practice
- Social media to advance legislation
- Strategic plan for patient-centered home care
- Planning sustainability of health centers
- Procuring legislative support for translation services
- Implementation of US Surgeon General's Call to action
- Implementation Strategies for Affiliate of ACNM
- Implementation of Evidence-based protocols of care into military healthcare services

Conclusions

COI model fosters self-learning, deeper learning, increases collegial collaboration

DNP student capstone projects in a distance program have been shown to impact health care quality via leadership and policy that could subsequently improve nationwide health care delivery

Implications for Practice

- Distance education allows students to continue working in their community while attaining a doctoral degree
- COI facilitates a cohort model at a distance
- Increases collegial relationships and national networking
- Work on policy changes and quality improvement within their community

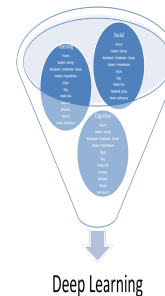


Figure 2. Learning Presences Combined

References

- Anderson, T., Rourke, L., Garrison, D. R., & Archer, W. (2001). Assessing teaching presence in a computer conferencing context. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 5(2), 1-17.
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