**Educational Preparation in the Nursing Profession**

**Introduction**

In detail, a nurse is an individual officially educated and trained in the care of patients. Nurses work closely and in coaction with other healthcare practitioners. The primary role of a nurse is to offer emotional, spiritual, and social care to sick people who are in need of treatment, safety, and recovery (Cronenwett et al, 2007). Health is the central focus of nursing. Health is a dynamic aspect of human-beings that incorporates physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and social dimensions. It must be remembered that human-beings interact with the physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and social environments in which they work, play, and live. The nursing responsibility is to offer healthy and secure environments so that people may live in optimal health (Grand Canyon University, 2016). However, the nursing profession has gradually changed in every direction of the healthcare setting. Owing to the complexity in the healthcare field, people have become concerned with efficacy of nursing programs offered in various universities and colleges. There has been conflicting ideas in trying to explain the differences in competencies between nurses prepared at the associate degree and the baccalaureate degree levels. According to Blegen et al. (2001), the expected programs for graduates from the different types of pre-licensure professional nursing programs directly relate to the educational preparation in each of the program types.

**Competencies of the Associate Degree in Nursing**

It is worth noting that the associate degree in nursing was advanced by Dr. Mildred Montag in 1950s (Friberg and Creasia, 2013). Friberg and Creasia (2013) assert that the World War two created shortages of Nurses. In order to alleviate the problem, Dr. Mildred Montag decreased the longevity of studying nursing to two years. The program received more weight and incorporated by different institutions since the graduates passed well in the NCLEX exam. Additionally, the graduates demonstrated adequate level of clinical nursing competence after being absorbed in the workplace. Basically, an associate degree program in nursing is attained after two years. After completion, the graduates are expected to pass the NUCLEX-RN exam as a requirement to start working as registered nurses. Associate Degree Nursing program exposes students to clinical fields, disease conditions and bedside nursing. The program involves little or no research. In other words, the program focuses on the technical training. However, the fact that NUCLEX-RN exam does not involve continuous assessment tests to measure performance over time or test the knowledge and skills acquired through the entire program have made many hospitals and other healthcare systems downsize on the recruitment of ADN nurses.

**Competencies of the Baccalaureate Degree Nursing**

A standard BSN is a four-year university or college program that integrates various liberal arts courses with professional education and training. According to Friberg and Creasia (2013), Baccalaureate Nursing was introduced in 1946 following a bill passed by GI Bill of Rights requiring practitioners to acquire vocational training and college education. The program is intended to prepare students adequately for working effectively in the growing and evolving healthcare setting. The course involves two years of universal education and another two years of core nursing courses. These courses are designed to prepare nurses for a variety of experiences and promote professional responsibilities. BSN provide expertise in mental health, outpatient care, and public health. Nurses with BSN degrees are skilled in delivering services in private homes and outpatient centers. Moreover, the demand for BSN nurses is continuously increasing since hospitals are now focusing more on acute and health care.

**Comparing Competencies of the two Types of Nurses**

Researches have shown that both types of nurses are competent and able to perform many of the same procedures and duties (AACN fact Sheet, 2014).  According to AACN (2014), lower mortality rates, fewer medication mistakes, and positive results in the healthcare systems are connected to nurses prepared at the baccalaureate and graduate degree levels. Recent studies also affirm that the amount of knowledge with respect to patient care and skills between ADN and BSN trained nurses is similar. However, differences in competencies are portrayed when it comes to management techniques and skills, leadership, decision making, communication, and critical thinking. Studies shows that bachelors prepared nurses have displayed higher and depth level of knowledge in their profession. BSN programs equip students with a solid and liberal education that makes them more desirable to employers.

**Patient Care Situation based on Decision Making of Educational Preparation of Nursing**

 An example of a patient care situation can be explained with a patient in Labor and Delivery scenario. The patients in such cases are likely to experience elevated blood pressures as they progress into labor. The ADN nurse is trained in reading looks on patients and dispense the medication. The BSN nurse on the on the other hand comes and see the same reading and notices the changes based on the patient’s reactions. The BSN is more inquisitive in trying to analyze possible causes of increased or reduced blood pressures. The nurse is trained on how to give right medication based on the body language of patient. The nurse may ask the patient if there is anything bothering her since pain relief helps in decreasing blood pressure. In such case, the BSN nurse avoids giving the patient over-medication for the blood pressure. Therefore, BSN nurses are exposed to broad education that incorporates various aspects of nursing that equips them with critical thinking skills necessary in giving care that is more complete (Martin et al, 2003)

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