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Message from the Chairperson's desk

Firstly, to wish you all a fulfilling and enjoyable year. I think we were all pleased to greet 2022 and hope for good things.

I am writing this from my home office where I have the privilege of overlooking a very green, well-watered garden and have been watching a mother ibis (we refer to them as hadeda birds) trying to wean her very persistent hungry baby. The baby kept trying to force the mother's beak open to get food and massaged her neck trying to get her to regurgitate. She tried everything to stop him doing this and to feed herself to no avail. Eventually she flew off leaving him lying in a miserable heap on the grass and came back a long time later when he had been forced to try getting food for himself. He was initially unsuccessful as he could not, or did not, push his beak far enough into the soft soil to find worms, or maybe was looking in the wrong place. I am telling you this long story as it reminded me of many of our students. They try and force us to give them information – preferably in the form of PowerPoint slides and we often give in initially as it is the easier way of doing it. The more we give, the more they demand until we “fly away.”

Now leaving them without the wherewithal to find the information is not an option – they are after all our customers – but there are many ways we can “wean” them and in so doing will assist them to become self-sufficient lifelong learners.

John Dewey's assertion that “Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself” is a good place to start. The content we believe our students should possess already exists in so many places – we do not have to give it to them – the very act of students having to locate the information and then decide how to use it is the part that will make them self-sufficient. Technology has made this so easy for us and for our students as information is just so accessible and then we need to assist students to decide what is credible information and what is not and how to tell the difference. Once they have accessed the information, the real education starts where they should be encouraged to use the information to answer challenging questions, apply the information to given situations, create cases for themselves and for others, develop care plans, debate with peers, teach others and in much more.

It is many years since the authors Bergmann and Sams (2012) wrote their book entitled, “*Flip your classroom: Reach every student in every class every day*” but the idea really works. For those of you unfamiliar with the idea, it basically requires the students to prepare for the class and spend time in class engaging with the material and with each other. Someone once explained it as instead of being taught in class and going home to do



**Cheers to a new year and
another chance to get it right**

— Oprah —

homework, the flipped classroom means they gain the information at home and do their homework in class. You will always have some students who are not prepared and try to be parasites on their peers, but their peers soon put a stop to that. The system works just as well with on-line learning as it does with face-to-face classes as long as the data and technology are available.

Many of you are probably using these ideas already

but hopefully this brief message might strengthen your resolve to enable our students to become lifelong learners and the message comes with a wish for a “flipping” good academic year.

For those of you who read the newsletter regularly, I would like to point out that I have not mentioned Covid once in this newsletter – except for now!

Sue Armstrong

RECOGNISING VOICES WHILE YOU SLEEP

Scientists on sleep say the most efficient time to put names to a face is in your sleep, and you would recognise unfamiliar voices - maybe not so bad if students sleep in class?

It is said that ducks and many other birds sleep with one eye open, referred to as unihemispheric sleep. This allows for the environment to be scanned for predators while getting the duck rest it needs. Similarly, sleep science indicates that the human brain also monitors its surroundings during sleep - as the eyes are closed, this monitoring relies mostly on hearing. The brain is faced with a challenging task. To protect sleep, harmless sounds like rain on the roof are suppressed, but has to be ready to wake you up if a potentially dangerous sound is heard.

New research

Researchers suggest that one way the brain discriminates between safe and potentially harmful sounds is by reacting differently to familiar and unfamiliar voices.

Researchers softly played audio recordings of voices to sleeping volunteers throughout the night. While the volunteers slept in the sleep laboratory, the electrical activity of their brains was recorded with EEG. The purpose was to look for differences in the brain's response to familiar and unfamiliar voices.

K-complexes are sharp waves seen in a sleep EEG that last about half-a-second. These waves can be generated spontaneously by the brain, but most often they occur after an outside disturbance, such as someone touching you lightly while you sleep. They are thought to protect sleep by stopping you from waking up when the disturbance is likely to be harmless.

What was observed by researchers

Researchers found that unfamiliar voices created more K-complexes than familiar voices. They suggest that sounds that could be more threatening are more likely to wake you up, so the brain has to work harder to suppress the sounds. This difference between K-complexes of familiar and unfamiliar voices disappeared during the second part



of the night. This may mean that the brain learned that the unfamiliar voice was safe.

Unfamiliar voices also triggered more micro-arousals lasting several seconds, which appears in an EEG as a brief mix of wake and sleep-like brain activity. They also occur spontaneously, or after outside disturbance, but do not usually result in the person waking up. The role of micro-arousals is not well understood.

Meaning of these findings

Previously scientists proposed that the brain enters a 'sentinel processing mode' or 'standby mode' while we sleep. The brain continues to monitor events in the environment, even as we fall deeper into sleep, processing the information to decide if it is relevant and dangerous. These study results seem to suggest that the identity of a speaker is a potential cue pointing to danger - unfamiliar speakers could pose a threat. This is difficult to prove, though, and it could be that new voices are just more attention grabbing. So if you struggle to sleep in a new environment, you know why. The sleeping brain is busy getting used to the new environment!

From: Tamminen, J. 2021. Royal Holloway University of London. How the brain tunes in to familiar voices while you're sleeping - and why it matters. THE CONVERSATION.

Anette Kennedy, former ICN President, highlights that we would need more nurses to push the boundaries of mass media in coming years to make inroads in the profile of nurses - COVID-19 was not enough

It is a priority to tell the public that we are the backbone of the health service - that we need to be retained and they need to know what our roles are. Three different approaches to pushing the boundaries were presented at the ICN conference during this session.

Dr Diana Mason (USA)

Nurses' voices in health news media matters because the public trusts us as experts with a unique perspective in health, illness, healthcare, and policy. Health news shapes public attitudes and beliefs. She tells journalists if they do not interview a nurse, they are missing the best part of the story. It is our social responsibility to bring our voices to public discussions on health issues.

Nurses as sources of information

A study in 1997 indicated that nurses were used as sources of information in only 4% of health stories in the US. Twenty years later, looking at the same publication, nurses were used in only 2% as source. While not statistically significant, this indicates that nothing changed. Nurses were absent from stories about policy, and female sources were under represented in the media and images. In a follow up qualitative study, journalist were interviewed about this. The overall theme was that there are biases about women, nurses and positions of authority in healthcare that impede their use of nurses as sources - journalists say that they:

- Have to justify myself to the editor if they use nurses, but not doctors. So, we have to push back against some of these biases.
- Do not fully understand the range of nurses' roles, work, and education, do not know where to find us, and have limited time to track us down. We clearly have to do a better job to explain what we do, and we have to make it easier to find us.
- Communications staff of healthcare organisations and universities aren't offering nurses as sources unless journalists ask for them - even then they are advised that they may not get a nurse. We have a huge job to do here to educate our public relations departments.

Nurses and nursing organisations are not strategic about accessing and engaging journalists.

But all this was before COVID - analysis shows that there were peaks of increase in the visibility of nurses during the various waves of COVID, but now it is going down again.

How can we make sure we remain visible?

Individual nurses should step up to be proactive and to demonstrate their expertise. Journalists use Twitter to share stories and find sources. So if you are not on Twitter yet, get linked to Twitter, follow some of those journalists,



and share messages showcasing your expertise here. Be responsive to their requests for interviews. Go for media training if necessary to make yourself more comfortable with working with the media.

Workplaces create a list of expertise in the organisation and then work with public relations staff on how to showcase that expertise. Be proactive in offering stories that would highlight that expertise.

Nursing education must start building-in media competencies into the curriculum.

Nursing organisations seem to be better at strategically using the public media but not other types of media. Educate journalists. Reach out to them and offer to be a source for them and if we step up, it could be mutually beneficial.

Many institutions globally has policies prohibiting nurses to speak out about challenges such as the shortage of PPE during COVID. Such policies are basically gag orders and should be considered in conjunction with the policies of the country - it is about safe and healthy workplaces.

Lill Sverresdatter Larsen (Norway)

In Norway they have a strategy “*Faget I front*” that translates to “*nursing knowledge first*”. A slogan and new approach on how they promote and talk about the profession - it is about presenting facts from nurses’ experiences. The strategy is to become a preferred expert, both in media and politics, on healthcare issues in a broad context and on nursing in a more specific sense. They shifted the focus from arguing that we ‘deserved’ higher salaries to displaying examples of the important role nurses play in the society.

Understanding the role of nurses

Corona became a game changer where the public came to understand the role of nurses and nursing. In celebration of the International Year of the Nurse, nine pieces of art were developed as project of the Norwegian NNA presenting a unique narrative of nursing as both a science



and an art. The aim was to raise nurses' voice and help to shed light on the struggle of the nurses in an understaffed environment. Norway is losing high numbers of nurses due burnout and if the trend continues, Norway will have lost 30,000 nurses by 2030. The picture above illustrates one of the pieces of art produced named *Breathe* by AFK showing a nurse that is struggling to breathe. The aim was to raise nurses' voice and to shed light on the struggle of nurses in an understaffed environment.

This project was used in conjunction with social media to reach out widely, with some posts occasionally making into the printed media. They worked actively in their networks to meet with ministers and opposition leaders, teaming up with the Minister of Health to write articles addressing the global shortage of nurses.

During the COVID pandemic, the NNA became the preferred expert as they had planned, appearing on TV and in the media.

Creating more momentum

Even though nursing got a lot of attention, is the largest profession in health, and had a crucial role in handling the pandemic, no nurse was appointed to the government Selected Commission on the Handling of COVID-19. They had to create more momentum. Surveys financed by the organisation was done of all members, and several for selected groups of members. The outcome of these surveys was used to back their arguments with newly discovered facts. This became of great value for use in media statements, as well as in conversations with the health authorities. Public media used the information for several stories.

Nine pieces of art in nine cities created momentum. The science of nursing is easily noticeable, but nursing is also an art. The art of building bridges between skills, knowledge, and science - the silent skillful way nurses transform these aspects into an act of care.

Prof Parveen Ali (UK)

The message was that we have to use the media more effectively – nurses have to improve public health literacy and make sure that we give the public the right messages. She highlighted the different kinds of media (print, broadcast, outdoor & transit, digital) that can be used

successfully by the profession to inform the public what we do. Broadcast media has the largest impact although nurses are less engaged here. Digital media offers opportunities for nurses to showcase the profession and what we do by helping communities to understand their health conditions.

She runs a weekly health show on radio and Facebook live for one hour every Friday. This programme aims to explain information on common and uncommon conditions in easy to understand and jargon free language for members of the community with limited English proficiency. It also is used as a resource for students.

The programme is delivered in the Urdu language and also shared on big nurses' networks. Sensitive issues are discussed which raise awareness and allows questions to be asked. It is done for the greater good and benefit of society, but also raises the profile of nurses and their work without talking about nursing specifically.

Lessons learned

Lessons learned is that it improved the image of nursing in the eyes of the public; the ability to communicate in various languages is a strength we should make use of; modern technology provides avenues for nurses to be involved in design and delivery of healthcare services thus improving the image of nursing without speaking of nurses; no amount of health information provision is ever enough as the needs of the population changes all the time and nurses can play an important part in that.

Tips she offered to engage with local media, is to focus on topics that you know well including current evidence, trends and information. Attend media training to understand how the media works and to improve communication skills. Introduce yourself as a nurse and topic expert to your local radio, television, and newspapers.

So, why all this information?

Three concepts stand out in this session: (i) strengthen communication skills - nurse leaders, at the very least, should be in constant contact with health reporters, (ii) changing the approach from nurses focusing on their rights, to focusing on showcasing what nurses do, and (iii) using platforms such as radio programmes or FB to talk to the public about health issues thus showcasing the knowledge and expertise of nurses without talking about nurses.

There are several lessons that educators can use in their education responsibilities. It is clear that in addition to competence in nursing and midwifery, the skill to articulate standpoints and other information, both orally and in writing, succinctly and clearly are essential skills.

Students should be taught to develop, frame, and present an argument succinctly and with clarity. Educators have to consider and teach the skills that students require to do so. They have to be taught to frame the message for a specific audience, and then to put the case succinctly in 1 - 2 pages/minutes to articulate a position or argument. Other tools that could be used is for students to develop a podcast or a documentary on the topic selected. It is also important to develop their verbal argumentation skills, so debates or presentations with time limits contribute to their skills and confidence. This is not an extra module, it is built into teaching and learning of the educational programme.

IF YOU ARE IN LIMBO?

This is called languishing - so what can one do if you feel restless, apathetic or empty? Jolanta Burke has some thoughts on this



Acknowledgement: Flickr

Languishing is defined as an emotional state of limbo, aimlessness and low mood, which last for a long time. Many describe it as feeling restless, apathetic or even emotionally empty. The question is whether nurse educators have time to go in limbo like this? Sometimes I think that we get so overwhelmed as educators, that we experience these symptoms which we then refer to as 'procrastination'. While languishing in itself is not considered to be a mental disorder, the problem is that it could ultimately lead to anxiety or depression.

Research in 78 different countries from April to June 2020 found that 10% of people experienced languishing during the pandemic. The causes are different for everyone.

What is the difference

Depression can be characterised by emotional, mental, behavioural and psychological symptoms (fatigue, sleeping too much or too little, weight loss or gain, negative thoughts and feelings, or suicidal thoughts).

Languishing shares some of these symptoms such as negative emotions, but characterised by not feeling in control of your life, feeling like you aren't able to grow or change and not engaging with your community, friends and family. Languishers are more likely not to know

what they wanted out of life, found setting goals for the near future unhelpful, or didn't take action when faced with adversity.

Languishers vs flourishers

Flourishers are seven times less likely to experience depression than others with lower levels of wellbeing such as languishers.

Both languishers and flourishers value having meaning in life. Languishers are more self-orientated, with flourishers being more focused on others and contributing to the greater good. Both value relationships, but connect in different ways. Languishers tend to feel their pets or possessions are most important to them and search for alternative ways to feel connected. Flourishers, on the other hand, are much more focused on connecting with people.

Languishers can therefore take some lessons from flourisher to improve their wellbeing.

Take action

Research has shown that finding ways of connecting with community, family and friends can assist languishers to improve their wellbeing. There are several ways that this can be done.

Performing acts of kindness for others, whether they are family, friends, colleagues, or even strangers. Other activities that may improve wellbeing for people with languishing include reflecting on what is going well in their lives, and trying to use less negative language. Actively seeking positive experiences that will allow you to feel connection with other people will assist with improving wellbeing and reduce experiences of languishing.

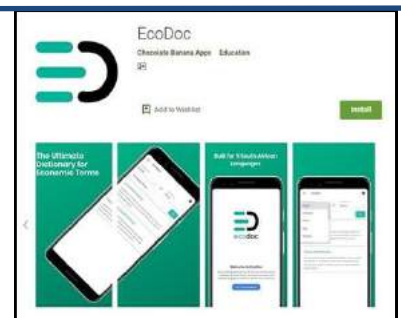
From: Jolanta Burke, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Positive Psychology and Health, RSCI University of Medicine and Health Sciences. 2022. Languishing: what to do if you're feeling restless, apathetic or empty. THE CONVERSATION

APP FOR STUDENTS:

EcoDoc

English as the general language used in South Africa often presents challenges in all educational institutions, including NEIs. Leigh Neethling, a lecturer at the faculty of economics at the University of Cape Town, with the assistance of two students, developed an app called 'EcoDoc' which translates over 1,000 economic terms into the 11 languages of South Africa. This bridges the language barrier for students when it comes to studying. While the students that interacted with this app, is said to be pleased with the app, it is too early to indicate the success of the app.

The app is available to the public at no cost for download from the Google Play Store.



FIX CHARLOTTE MAXEKE HOSPITAL

Following the devastating fire at the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH), the lack of repairs for the damage incurred, impacts negatively on nursing education students

Nine months after a devastating fire ravaged the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH) it has still not been repaired. The fire damage was followed by floods in November. The fire resulted in the closure of key parts of the hospital and this impacted on the public health system in Gauteng. Several wards were closed, including the respiratory wards that had a specialized cystic fibrosis clinic, resulting in patients being admitted into other wards where they are exposed to high-risk infections. There is a shortage of beds - the cardiothoracic ICU is not available, and limited beds in other ICUs are used in the meantime which compromises the admission rates and waiting list for surgery that was already long prior to COVID-19. Cancer patients have to go to CHBH while 40 beds for mental health patients has also been closed.

Impact of the damage

In addition to the closure of beds, patients have to be referred or find alternative centers to access their treatment. This places an increased burden on the other hospitals in the region which are not equipped to deal with the type of patient and the patient load.

Most concerning is that the lack of progress to fix CMJAH also has a serious impact on the training of students. NEIs had to urgently search and get SANC approval for alternative clinical placement facilities. This in an environment where student placement is already limited due to the number of NEIs that are placing



Acknowledgement: News24

students at the hospital. This at a time when SANC has decreased the student intake numbers and COVID has compromised student exposure to clinical education.

Should nurse educators also write to the President about this?

COVID-19

ADJUSTED ALERT LEVEL 1 REGULATIONS

A special Cabinet meeting held at the end of January 2022 approved changes to the Adjusted Alert Level 1 COVID-19 Regulations that comes into operation with immediate effect

Information gathered by the Department of Health has reported that South Africa has exited the fourth wave. Based on the trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the levels of vaccination in the country, the Cabinet has decided on the following changes:

- Those testing positive with no symptoms do not have to isolate
- Those who test positive with symptoms must isolate only for seven (7) days
- COVID contacts do not have to isolate
- Full time schooling can resume for all schools without the 1 m distancing.

Government urges South Africans to get vaccinated, to continue to observe the COVID regulations and the basic health protocols.



Acknowledgement: flickr.com

THE FIGHT AGAINST GBV

The President of the country has signed off three important pieces of gender-based violence legislation that will hopefully be beneficial in the fight against gender-based violence (GBV)



proceedings and it is hoped that bail will be more regularly denied for GBV cases, there will be more protection for victims, quicker and easier application orders.

Domestic Violence Amendment Bill

This Bill includes new definitions such as “controlling behaviour” and expand existing definitions such as (domestic violence to include spiritual or elder abuse, coercive or controlling behaviour and exposing children to certain listed behaviours).

Importantly this Bill provides for a strengthened protection order system through support mechanisms for the implementation of protection orders, such as online applications for a protection order against domestic violence; and obligates State departments to provide certain services to victims of domestic violence. Safety monitoring notices can be issued by the court for the relevant police station to monitor the safety of persons with a protection order who still have to share a residence with the abuser.

Other matters

Some items that activists believe should have been included, are a minimum sentence for sex offenders; staffing of social development departments which need more social workers; and more resources allocated for victims with many shelters at capacity.

(McCain, N. 2022. Legislation to beef up fight against gender based violence, welcomed by activists. news24)

South Africa has a high prevalence of gender based violence (GBV) as reported daily in the media. But it is also known that GBV is under reported as women are often too scared of the consequences should they dare report it. Other reasons such as stigma, or shame and other social consequences also play a role.

The legislation amends three important pieces of gender based violence legislation. This legislation will make it more difficult for perpetrators to escape justice.

Criminal Law

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offence and Related Matters) Amendment Bill expands the scope of the National Register for sex Offenders to include the particular of all sex offenders and not only sex offenders against children and persons who are mentally disabled.

Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Bill

This Bill allows for additional procedures to reduce secondary victimization of vulnerable persons in court

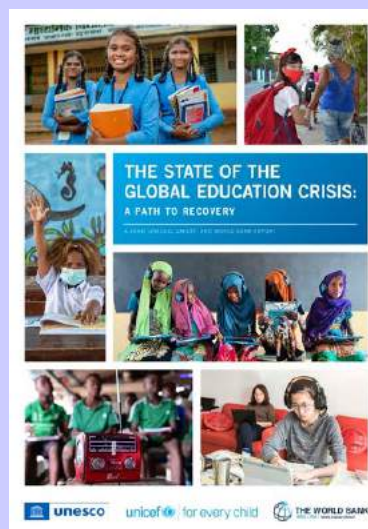
COVID-19

GLOBAL DISRUPTION TO EDUCATION

The global disruption to education by the COVID-19 pandemic is without parallel and the effects on learning are severe. We realise that we need children with a sound basic education to enrol in programmes

Even before COVID-19 hit, the world was already experiencing a learning crisis with 258 million primary- and secondary-school age children and youth out of school. Many children who were in school were learning very little: 53 % of all ten-year-old children in low- and middle-income countries were experiencing learning poverty, meaning that they were unable to read and understand a simple age-appropriate text at age 10. The pandemic brought education systems across the world to a halt, with school closures affecting more than 1.6 billion learners. While nearly every country in the world offered remote learning opportunities for students, the quality and reach of such initiatives varied greatly, and they were at best partial substitutes for in-person learning.

Progress made for children and youth in other domains stagnated or reversed. The pandemic forced education to learn some critical lessons, but also highlighted that transformation and innovation are possible. This report presents new evidence on the severity of the learning losses incurred during school closures and charts a path out of the global education crisis, towards more effective, equitable, and resilient education systems. Schools should be reopened, learners' levels assessed as substantial losses in reading and math have been documented; and remedial measures implemented as required to prevent learning losses from growing. While schools in South Africa are opening now, some learners are 75% to one year behind where they should be!



Azevedo, JPW; et al. 2021. *The State of the Global Education Crisis : A Path to Recovery* (Vol. 2): (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

OVER BIASES IN REVIEW PROCESSES

Concerns remain over geographical biases in the evaluation of scientific research that could be disadvantaging scholars from Africa



Familiar with the feeling this pic brings about? Also known as writer's block or mental block, better described as an overwhelming feeling of being stuck in the writing process without the ability to move forward to write something new! Some of us often find ourselves there!!

Publishing in scientific journals

Having acknowledged how difficult it is to get that article written, it is quite disappointing if the journal to which it was submitted, sends it back by return of post to say it is "not suitable" for that journal - while you know very well that your article on education research undertaken, for example, is suitable for that specific international educational journal.

This experience concurs with research in 2021 "*Meta-Research: Weak evidence of country- and institution-related status bias in the peer review of abstracts*". This study showed limited evidence that the geographical location and institutional affiliation of authors influence

how scientific abstracts are evaluated by their peers. But we know that in real-life abstracts are often rejected before being read if the reviewer, or more often the editor, perceived the author's institution or country of origin to be of lower scientific status.

Similarly, another 2021 study emphasizes that the geographical biases should not be underestimated with "*The impact of geographical bias when judging scientific studies*" highlighting the need for more studies to evaluate the impact of geographical biases in the scientific world. The 2020 study "*The role of geographic bias in knowledge diffusion: A systematic review and narrative synthesis*" indicated the significance of drawing attention to the role geographical biases play in the process of knowledge diffusion, prejudice against low-income countries' research, as well as addressing inequalities in knowledge production and publication.

Determining bias

Determining bias is difficult to affirm because some universities in South Africa, Egypt and Kenya occupy strong positions in world university ranking schemes mainly based on research published in peer-reviewed journals. Other countries should identify and analyse the factors underlying the success of these universities to apply them in their own situations says Prof Juma Shabani (member editorial advisory board of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*).

Do you agree with the statement? Maybe partially!?

From (Sawahel, W. 2022. African scholars concerned over biases in review processes. University World News, Africa Edition. From: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20220126085931412>)

WHAT ABOUT

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF RESEARCH?

There is a growing expectation that academic research should be impactful beyond the confines of university walls

Social impact is said to give purpose to our work, but there are those that suspect that "social impact" is just another buzz word. The findings and conclusions of our research have the potential to play a significant role in innovation and progressing societies and economies as we have seen with some of the research done during the COVID pandemic. In the social sciences, research can highlight corruption, inequality, power imbalances, and other social issues which contribute to better societies if we provide solutions or formulate strategies to address those - recognizing that these are issues not easily reversed or changed. But to be of value, the outcome should be shared, read and put into practice.

Critical for development

Trustworthy knowledge are critical for development in many areas and many governments and NGOs need such information to change their approach and truly innovate. It is essential that this knowledge production move away from known and outdated structures and models to bring new insights and ideas that are rigorously researched and representative of diverse perspectives.

Can we promote reading of our research?

But again, the research providing such information can only be of value if it is read, and this is something we do not have control over. Academic



insights can make transformation possible while minimizing risks to provide a roadmap to a more progressive society. Some strategies to increase the probability of it being read to increase impact include using simpler language, producing usable blurbs, publishing on public platforms, or sending the information directly to the end user. This can only be done after publication in a peer-review journal, because as we know, publishing in peer reviewed journals is an important part of universities' third stream income.

Social impact discussion

At the end of January 2022 the University of Johannesburg's faculty of humanities and Acume (an initiative to condense academic research for broader accessibility) hosted an open discussion on social impact to explore insights and tools to condense research for wider access.

(Finbow, Y. 2022. Why caring about the social impact of research matters. University World News. THE GLOBAL WINDOW ON HIGHER EDUCATION. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20220123075750857>)



Let's Talk - teaching critical thinking

NEA Discussion & debate corner

This page is created for NEA members to air their views on education matters relating to the education and training of nurses and midwives. Send your contribution to n.geyer@edunurse.co.za

One of the important skills that would strengthen our professional image as competent practitioners that provide care with excellence, is critical thinking. Educators have a responsibility to make sure that every student leaving their NEI is an independent and critical thinker

This is experienced as a daunting task by many of us because it requires us as educators to also be independent and critical thinkers. Independent thinkers, as we do not take 'everything' at face value, and critically thinking 'everything' through before responding or acting. If students were taught well, they will be able to do this in seconds and minutes and not in hours as was done during class time. It becomes a life skill that is applied in all our thoughts and activities. Most importantly, it assists us as nurses (or midwives) to define a patient's problems in order to plan appropriate care; to respond immediately when an emergency arises; and to solve all other problems. How many of you have worked in a clinical situation where the unit manager disappears when there is a crisis? We do not want our students to be like that!

What is critical thinking?

There are several definitions for critical thinking, but in higher education it refers to the higher-order thinking skills that we would assess with Bloom's taxonomy at the level of analysing, evaluating, and creating. The skills required here, require practitioners to think in a more complex manner when engaging with the aspect in front of them. They then analyse the information available on the topic whereafter a judgement or opinion can be formulated as indicated in the attributes of critical thinking summarised by Monash University:



In this process students will learn how to isolate the essence of the argument and focus responses directed at the aspect at hand. This part of critical thinking can be strengthened in the way that assignments or assessments are marked by educators: only marking responses that are succinct, targeted and not the "woolly" unnecessary extra, meaningless wording or statements included in the assignments / answers.

Responsibility of educators:

Educators must be critical and independent thinkers themselves with a specialisation area and several years of clinical experience. They should also remain updated in their field of specialisation in terms of research and new clinical developments.

Those of you who have read Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers*, will recall his story about 10,000 hours, which he equated to about 10 years. He said it looks like anyone needs to spend 10,000 hours practicing before we get good at what we do. If this is divided by the hours nurses work, it gives five (5) years of practicing in your area of specialisation. In some clinical

specialisations such as intensive care, students are required to have worked in an ICU for at least one year prior to enrolling for the programme which speaks to the same principle.

The combined knowledge and skill, gives educators the competence to build critical thinking skills into their teaching and learning for students. Considering that nursing programmes now have to be assessed at a prescribed NQF level in the higher education band, there is an obligation on educators to develop learning material in such a way that critical thinking is built into the development of nursing programmes that put knowledge to work through deliberate practice focusing on critical thinking skills to assist students to apply their new knowledge in clinical practice.

Another aspect of the educator's responsibility relates to the assessment of the students' work. Exam papers are often set only requiring students to regurgitate knowledge which is unacceptable - the assessment must include higher level questions and thinking. The same goes when marking papers - **never** give marks for a statement that is unjustified, not applicable, or wrong.

Teaching critical thinking

Teaching critical thinking does not mean that we do not attend to the theory that students should master - after all one cannot be thinking critically of a subject that you know nothing about. It remains a vital part of the educator's task. Some of the things that can be done are:

- Formulate the assignments or questions clearly and in such a way that the students know exactly what information to look for. This is where Bloom's or other taxonomies play a role
- Educators must develop scenarios and case studies with real life problems related to the programme modules to assist with the application of knowledge and decision making - therefore educators must remain updated in their area, also clinically
- Encourage students to make connections between the knowledge and learnings and real-life situations
- Incorporate different points of view
- Ask open ended questions and allow for reflection
- Encourage creativity in assignments allowing students to do all the work for the assignments
- Use games, such as brain teasers, or giving statements that students have to draw lateral links from (eg how is raising a child like building a house)
- Explore advertisements or political statements in groups
- Nursing depends on teamwork, so devising group projects or assignments are essential.

References

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AN APPLE A DAY IN 2022

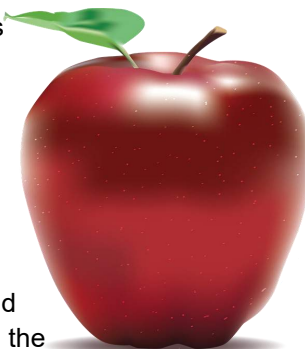
By the time you receive this newsletter, you have hit the ground running in a brand new academic year. In spite of two challenging years, we have the opportunity to start again in a new year

Time flies is something we all say at some stage when we get to a deadline that arrives unexpectedly quickly. As children we, and now our own children, scoff when we dare make this statement! But then, if you think about time hypothetically in the following way, one can understand that we all eventually come to realise that time does fly by so quickly. For a 10-year old child a year feels like a long time because they have only lived about 10% of their life time, while for a person 100-years old it goes by quickly as represents 1% of their live time. We all know that not all of us would live that long, but it does make the point.

During the hard lockdown in 2020, we mostly felt that time goes by too slowly until we devised ways to continue with our educational programmes. In the daily challenges of mastering new ways of teaching and learning, we found that time passed by too quickly and this continued through 2021 even though we were slightly better prepared for virtual life.

In 2022 we enter the year still with one foot in a virtual space and another foot now back in the contact space but still not really knowing what the pandemic is going to do this year. So for now we go on educating one day at a time having planned the year ahead - so, as the ancient saying goes, *carpe diem*: grab the day to make sure that we use our valuable time meaningfully. After all, we know that time flies, but we have to remember we are the pilot of our own flights and we can make a difference.

The pandemic creates uncertainty in our day-to-day life. A lovely story told by someone gives us some guidance on this¹. A journalist sat next to an old lady on a train journey in Cape Town. She took a red apple from her bag, and rubbed it until it shone and the journalist wondered how she was going to eat this apple as she did not have a tooth in her mouth. The next moment she leans over and asks him "*Sir, please will you start this for me?*"



We do not know if he did it for her, but it reminds us that on our less than best days, we also need a kick start to face our day ahead. It confirms our need to support each other through the year, but also to pursue the good things in life that is important to us.

Wishes for 2022

To add to the message from the Chairperson, we wish you a great year with some amazing successes at a personal and professional level! If anything arises where you think that NEA could assist, please let us know!

1. Reference: Andre van Niekerk, 2018. Beeid page 15

2022

NEA CPD EVENTS PLANNED

On 26 January 2022 a group of members of the EA Chapter Committees got together for a virtual think tank to decide on topics for capacity building during 2022.

Change of planned activities

It was agreed that the workshops would be presented as hybrid events and as soon as face-to-face workshops can be undertaken the appetite for that will be tested as we move forward this year.

One of the proposals agreed upon, is that shorter 1-hour events would be arranged on a monthly basis during the year starting in February. The events would be recorded on the first presentation of the event for members to access if they were not able to do so on the day of live presentation. The platform for members' access of previous events will be advised in due course.

The different events will be planned and developed by the different chapters and will be available at national level. The dates for the year will be made available in as soon as the programme is finalised.

Thank you!

A BIG thank you goes to the delegates who agreed to develop the workshops for NEA members - we look forward to what we are about to receive!!



Professional societies celebrating
Nurses and Midwives

2022 CONFERENCE

A hybrid conference will be hosted in 2022 and the platform will be shared by a few professional societies

Save the date

22 - 24 September 2022

2021 MANDELA DAY

As we celebrate Mandela Day in 2021, it is following a week of the worst and the best of the people of South Africa

TIME TO

RENEW ANNUAL PRACTICING CERTIFICATES

