The Specialist Community Nursing (SCN) proficiency ePortfolio: fostering learner agency in the workplace

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Learner Agency

Learner agency is about having the power, combined with choices, to take meaningful action and see the results of one’s decisions. It can be thought of as a catalyst for change or transformation. (CORE Education 2014)

Power to act!
Bucks SCN course: context

Specialist Community Public Health Nursing and Specialist Practitioner Qualification.

- District nurses
- Health visitors
- Community Children’s Nurses
- School Nurses

Qualified nurses undertaking a further degree or post graduate diploma - 1 year.
The SCN ePortfolio - structure

**Competency** - “...the skills and ability to practise safely and effectively without the need for direct supervision” (Nursing and Midwifery Council 1999). Stage 3 on Benner’s stages of clinical competence (1984)

**Proficiency** - Mastery of a specific behavior or skill demonstrated by consistently superior performance, measured against established, professional standards (Business Dictionary 2018). Stage 4 on Benner’s stages of clinical competence (1984)
Reflections on the Standards of Proficiency for SCPHNs

Your aim in this section is to demonstrate through the reflections on practice experiences that you are

1. fit for practice
2. fit for purpose
3. fit for award
4. fit for professional standing

You will need to hyperlink your reflections below.

- Domain A - the search for health needs
- Domain B - The stimulation of health needs
- Domain C - Influence on policies affecting health
- Domain D - Facilitation of health enhancing activities
- Reflection on public health placements (500-1000 words)
- Reflection on alternative experience (500-1000 words)
- Reflection on Nurse prescribing (500 -1000 words)
Purpose

To explore the affordances of the Specialist Community Nursing (SCN) ePortfolio that

1. enable learner agency

2. contribute to the digital capability of stakeholders
Examining learner agency in the SCN ePortfolio

What happens in the ePortfolio environment?

• provides space for SCN students to demonstrate their learning through their construction (Collection, Reflection, Feedback)

• offers accessibility to promote independence (students can readily access what they need for learning in the Filing Cabinet)

• is flexible and provides options for ways of working depending on student preferences

• celebrates both the process and products of the creative, learning process (Reflections)
Examining learner agency in the SCN ePortfolio (cont.)

• evidences a broad range of experiences and perspectives (campus and work-based)

• promotes collaboration and interaction with CPTs (possibly peers)

• evidences student ownership/ autonomy of their learning

• supports a growth (rather than fixed) mindset (About me, SWOT, Action Plan)

• evidences student self-awareness of the responsibility of one’s own actions in the work and ePortfolio environment and on others
Examining learner agency in the SCN ePortfolio

What does the SCN student do in the ePortfolio environment?

- demonstrates growth and development from “novice to expert” (Benner 1984) SCNs within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky 1978)
- monitors their own progress in meeting their personal and professional goals (Oermann 2002)
- reflects on their actions and self-regulate
- gives access, editing rights to CPTs, Link Tutors and Course Teams to their ePortfolio for formative feedback (making choices), verification
Examining learner agency in the SCN ePortfolio

What does the CPT do in the ePortfolio environment?

● ensures opportunities for student voice to be heard and to influence the flow of events
● creates opportunities for students’ interests and experiences to be built into learning
● provides freedom and choice that enables students to exercise their agency
● provides the scaffolding required for the meaning making process
● provides resources that will support and stimulate
● provides authentic learning challenges and tasks
● supports a growth (rather than fixed) mindset.
Findings

All About Me

I am looking forward to the coming year as it has always been an ambition of mine to become a health visitor since my time as an health visitors assistant (HVA). I worked as an HVA in Hertfordshire for almost 2 years and I loved my job along with the colleagues I worked with. They inspired me to take on my midwifery course with the long term view of becoming a health visitor.

My training in midwifery was full of highs and lows, both personal and work related. However, I soon realised that I loved working in healthcare, and being able to help people and guide them gave me great job satisfaction.

I am now here embarking on my career into health visiting, with anticipation for what the future holds, and ready to start this year of training. I’m prepared for it being tough, but I hope also enjoyable.

As part of starting the course I have carried a **SWOT analysis** on myself, and my mentor/CPT has also completed a **SWOT analysis** for me.
A monthly blog/update on the course and my progress to date to reflect on experiences and feelings

**Placement finished, e-portfolio nearly finalised**

posted 14 Aug 2017, 14:51 by Julie Casey

The final placement day, can’t believe I won’t be working with the team anymore. They have been great, they have accepted me from the start along with my relentless questioning and rationalising. I couldn’t have asked for a better CPT, (who alongside my essays and work has also been trying to complete her own course!). I got some lovely leaving gifts and will take with me many lessons learnt and some wonderful memories.

Now to upload all my final documents and organise my e-portfolio so that everything links to the right places and then submission. I have learnt a great deal about the leading and managing of a team and have also learnt so much in regards to though patient assessments, all of which I will take with me to my new role. Alongside that I have built confidence and found strengths I didn’t know I had. I can recognise my strengths and weaknesses but now no longer see them as a hinderance but more a challenge to overcome rather than a downfall and will always remember my time as a SPQDN. When times get tough I will use this reflective time to impact on my practice positively.

Student is bound up with what is going on in practice: its outcome makes a difference to her: she is a participant, agent (vs spectator) Takes ownership of the outcomes
Findings

Reflections on the domains of practice

I have reflected on the SoPs (linked to domains) and the evidence is in the competencies sign off link.

| Domain A - the search for health needs | Domain A | competencies sign off |
| Domain B - The stimulation of health needs | Domain B | competencies sign off |
| Domain C - Influence on policies affecting health | Domain C | competencies sign off |
| Domain D - Facilitation of health enhancing activities | Domain D | Competencies sign off |
| Reflection on public health placements (500-1000 words) | Public health day reflection |
| Reflection on alternative experience (500-1000 words) | Alternative Practice |
| Reflection on Nurse prescribing (500 -1000 words) | Nurse Prescribing |

https://sites.google.com/site/scn2016eportfolionickycousin/learning-contracts
Findings

SCN ePortfolios demonstrate agentic behaviours.

1. **Self-regulation** or students’ personal agency  
   - self-belief that their behaviour and approach to learning will transform them from novice to proficient Specialist Community Nurses in the workplace

2. **Ownership of learning**: personalised, individualised approaches to choice of content, process and self-assessment of that learning

3. **Accountability**: students demonstrate awareness of the impact of their decisions, actions on the thinking, behaviour or decisions of others - and vice versa.

4. **Learner-centric pedagogy** - student involvement in the entire process of ePortfolio development

5. **Voice**: reflections on the SoP in the ePortfolio are students’ engaged and authentic ways of voicing their learning
Enablers of learner agency

- Infrastructure: student owned, free, institution independent Web 2.0 tool allowing creativity, 24/7 accessibility, shareability with student selected audience (ownership, self-regulation, identity, autonomy of their workplace environment and opportunities for responsibility)


- Template (scaffold) with required forms in Storage/Filing Cabinet: Student selects best evidence from collection (critical thinking) to present for assessment and showcasing (McCready 2006)

- Space for Reflection on chosen experiences: demonstrate awareness of the responsibility of student's own actions in the workplace environment and on others

- Agency of CPTs, course team - their capacity and propensity to take purposeful initiative; i.e. embed the ePortfolio in the course and provide the various scaffolds within the environment to promote learner agency (The linking theory to practice - the ePortfolio handbook)
Students’ perceptions

- Gave me understanding of how I did my practice and had dialogue with my CPT who supported me.

- It is a good record that shows me how far I have come and how much I have achieved, especially when reading over previous reflections.

- It also has highlighted the mistakes that I would have failed to notice and open my mind of things I could change in the future.

- Being able to personalise the e-portfolio page has been able to show my creative, colourful side, I do wish that I had more IT skills so that I could add better visuals to it.

- It helped me to assess my needs for this course and to know what is expected of me. Comments from the CPT have helped me to improve as well by giving feedback.

- I was motivated to create a private journal about what I try to complete regularly after practice. The journal entries provide a stimulus that I use when writing up formal reflections.
What students like most ...

It is a record of what I have achieved and how I have developed personally and professionally over the last year.

Enables me to see how far I have come since starting the course

Personalising it to suit me and my learning

Seeing progression and achievements

very well structured to achieve my learning outcomes and to reflect myself.

Keeps everything safe and easy to access

I can access it from anywhere and it is easy to use. It will be a document that I can continue to use after this course.

the idea that the portfolio is paperless

I can personalize it to they way i work

Monitoring my personal progress from the beginning of the course
Summary

The SCN ePortfolio is a dynamic record of agentive encounters with the SCN workplace:

- a record that is related to the students’ past as NMC registered nurses (Benner’s stage 3) but also extrapolated into the future

- a transformative experience (Benner’s stage 3 to stage 4)
  - self awareness for growth potential
  - realisation of having a voice (interaction, feedback, curiosity)
Now what

Spinal Column (Endacott et al. 2004)

Cake mix (Endacott et al. 2004)


