

Nursing Professional Development: Lifelong Learning

Suzanne J. Canfield, MBA, BSN, RN, NPD-BC
NMNA Accredited Approver Program Director

Nursing Professional Development (NPD) has evolved into its own recognized nursing specialty. One essential element of nursing professional development is the continuing education of licensed professional RN's. The American Nurses Credentialing Center's (ANCC) accreditation and approval processes identified in the *2015 Primary Accreditation Approver Application Manual (1st ed.)* and Harper, M.G., & Maloney, P. (2016) set the bar for quality nursing professional development. The words, nursing professional development, infer further development of the nurse who is already a licensed professional. Nursing professional development includes both post-licensure academic education and continued nursing education provided to RN's in practice. NPD practitioners, as mentors, leaders and learning facilitators, support organizations as well as RN's professional growth in both arenas. Shinnars and Graebe (2020) stated, "Although the individual nurse is responsible for their educational choices, the NPD practitioner provides guidance to meet both professional and organizational goals."

Academic pre-licensure nursing education involves the theoretical and practical training to prepare students for their roles as nursing professionals. The courses direct nursing students to independent status as registered nurses. Both pre-licensure nursing education and nursing professional development involve thinking critically, communicating accurately, and performing nursing interventions in a caring and ethical manner. However, pre-licensure education is focused on teaching and learning the basics of professional nursing, as well as health and illness concepts. (see NM Nursing Education Consortium on-line model below.) The academics are focused on *introducing* nursing students to the standards of professional nursing care, as the specific goals and objectives related to those standards are conveyed. The learning needs have been *pre-determined* by those standards which must be well understood to become licensed.

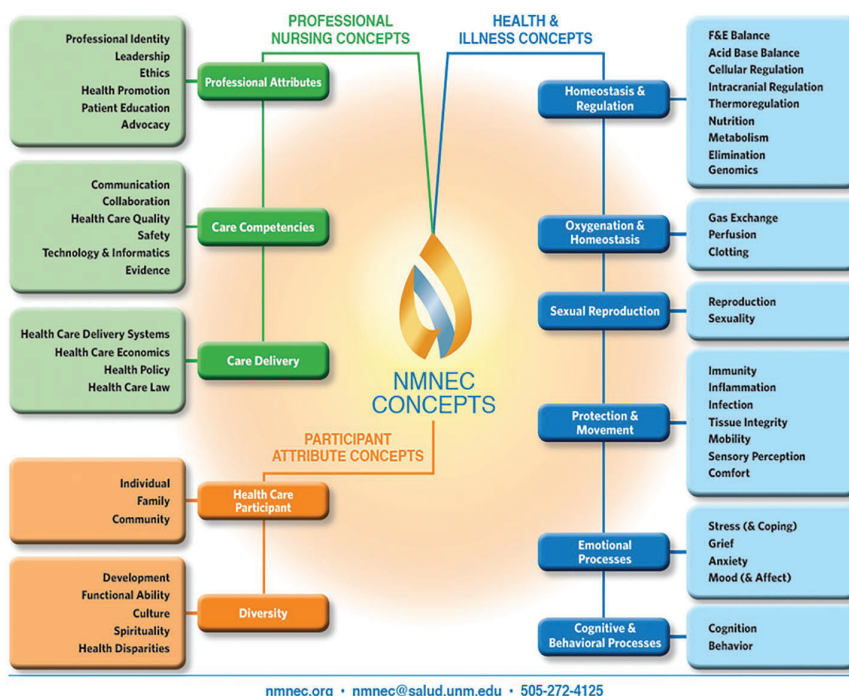
Nursing continuing professional development *builds upon professional licensed nurses' education and experience*. This phrase is often used interchangeably with continuing nursing education (CNE), which continues to evolve. Nursing professional development has a systems model (See model below) (Harper and Maloney, p.10) which is based upon inputs, throughputs and outputs.

Rather than being pre-determined, nursing professional development is initiated by:

- Assessing nurses' learning needs based upon evidence
- Performing gap analyses
- Planning activities that use adult learning and specific design principles
- Evaluating the learning outcomes of participants
- Completing summary evaluations of activities by NPD practitioners/Nurse Planners.

Evidence-based practice grounded in current research is at the core of all NPD. Nursing Continuing Professional Development that is approved to award credit hours by ANCC/NMNA must include these components.

To meet the American Nurses Credentialing Center's concepts, as presented in the *2015 Primary Accreditation Approver Application Manual (1st ed.)* for awarding contact hours for nursing continuing professional development, the NPD Practitioner/Nurse Planner should begin with these questions:



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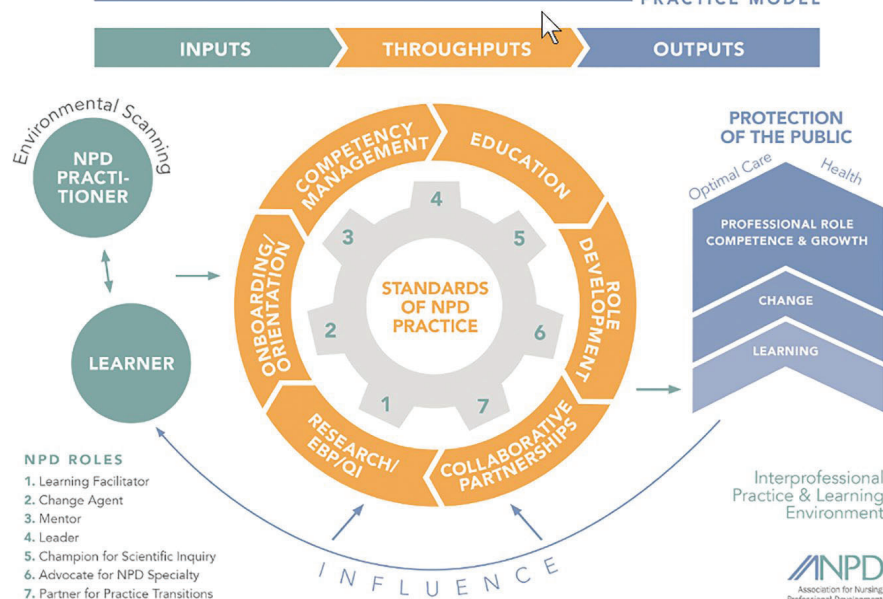
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"Why plan this activity here and now?
 "What is the issue and what evidence points to this issue?"

"Is the issue educational, or is it administrative or behavioral?"

If the issue is educational, the next questions are:

"What are the nurses' current states, which may vary, in relation to the identified issue?"

"What are the desired states to be achieved by this activity?"

"What are the gaps between those states - knowledge, skill or practice?"

"Will this activity build upon nurses' knowledge and experience?"

Once these are identified, planning the activity should begin. The questions are:

"Who is the target audience?"

"Who are the stakeholders that should plan the activity?"

"What evidence-based research and which experts can provide the content for this activity?"

"Using Adult Learning Principles, what are the best active learning strategies that are appropriate for this audience?"

"What are the participants' Learning Outcomes of this activity and how will those outcomes be measured immediately at the end of the activity?"

Finally, the last questions are:

"Were the Learning Outcomes met for the participants?"

"How will the feedback from the participants be evaluated?"

"What would be changed if the activity is offered again?"

Once the NPD Practitioner/Nurse Planner has responded to these questions, he/she is following the process to meet ANCC/NMNA criteria to award Nursing Continuing Professional Development (NCPD) contact hours. Although there may be some crossover, these questions are based on learning needs of the practicing professional nurse which differ from the pre-licensure nursing students' foundational education.

All educational activities are not appropriate for awarding ANCC/NMNA approved contact hours. For example, training by a commercial interest's employee to use a new device or supply involves a conflict of interest. Breakfast, lunch and breaks may not be counted in contact hour calculations unless the speaker presents topics for nursing professional development or improving patient outcomes, and the content is not related to a commercial interest entity. Introductions and welcomes by guests during orientation cannot be calculated into NCPD contact hours. Any educational activities that do not follow the ANCC/NMNA processes nor provide the key information required cannot be approved. What is important to note is that the quality of the activities and our approvals are grounded in applicants using and documenting these processes. The template forms are only the mechanism to validate that our processes have been used from the onset of planning.

As stated by Graebe and Dickerson (2021), There has never been a more important time for evidence-based, quality nursing professional development that improves professional practice and patient outcomes. The focus of the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Accreditation in NCPD criteria is on developing education to address identified gaps in knowledge, skill and/or practice, maintain content integrity, and analyzing measurable outcomes to demonstrate closure or narrowing of the gaps that created the need for the education. Accreditation in NCPD is not about nurses earning contact hours! The contact hour is the "currency" that is awarded when learners complete NCPD activities, but receiving the credit is of little value if it does not contribute the practice of the nurse, achievement of improvements in their work, and/or the outcomes that support the strategic initiatives of the organization. Accreditation in NCPD is about ensuring that the learning experiences of nurse learners is outcome driven.

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June	6/2/2021	6/16/2021
July	7/7/2021	7/21/2021
August	8/4/2021	8/18/2021
September	9/1/2021	9/15/2021
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NMNA welcomes all applications. Our goal is the provision of quality continuing nursing professional development to nurses, and coaching applicants is one of our roles. If there are any questions about our processes and approvals, please send them to CEAPPS@nmna.org.

References

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- New Mexico Nursing Education Consortium (NMNEC). *NMNEC concepts*. Retrieved February 11, 2021, from www.NMNEC.org

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