Transition of Novice Nurse Faculty into the Academic Setting: A Qualitative Phenomenological Pilot Study

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Background

- Nurse Faculty Shortage
  - Over 1500 full-time faculty positions are vacant and one-third of current nursing faculty will retire in the next ten years (Fang & Kesten, 2017).
  - 88,939 qualified students were turned away from nursing programs due to the lack of faculty (AACN, 2018).
- Transition into Faculty Role
  - Intricacies in academic culture, difference in structure between clinical and university setting and workplace expectations can also disrupt a positive transition into the faculty role.
  - New faculty often experience stress, anxiety and role strain which can lead to turnover (Goodrich, 2014; Lee, Miller, Kippelenbrock, Rosen, & Emory, 2017).
  - Many new faculty also lack formal preparation in nursing education theory and pedagogy (Dreifuerst et al., 2016).

Purpose

- The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of novice nurse faculty during their transition into the academic setting.
- The purpose of this study is to better understand the transition and experiences of novice nurse faculty.
- By examining the role transition of novice nurse faculty, nursing programs can impact the success and longevity of new faculty by developing strategies to build supportive academic environments that foster a positive role transition.

Methods

- Study participants (n=3) include full-time faculty in two different academic programs of nursing in a large, Midwestern city.
- Faculty were recruited via email and word-of-mouth through nurse faculty and administrators.
- Qualitative descriptive phenomenological study (Colaizzi’s, 1978) seven-step method was used for data analysis to explore the phenomenon of transition as novice nurse faculty experience it in the academic setting.
- Interviews
  - Indiana University IRB approval
  - Five novice faculty replied to recruitment email with interest with three faculty members consenting to study participation and completed interviews via Zoom.
- Data generating questions included:
  - What was it like for you when you first started in your role as a novice faculty member?
  - Reflect back on your expectations when you entered into the faculty role. How have your expectations influenced your role?

Demographics

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Work Experience</td>
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<td>Degree</td>
<td>PhD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Lecturer (Non-Tenure Track)</td>
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</tbody>
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Themes

Learning the Curriculum
- "It was like drinking from a fire hydrant."

Juggling the Academic Workload: Not What was Expected
- "Coming into the role I really expected that my week would look exactly like what was on my offer letter. When I got into the role that’s not what it looks like at all."

Sink or Swim: Unexpected Autonomy in the Classroom
- "There’s a lot more autonomy in this role than I ever had in a previous role. I got started, and it was kind of like, am I doing this right?"

Discussion

The themes from this study highlight what is experienced by novice faculty that facilitate or hinder the transition into the nurse faculty role.

- Mentoring
  - Findings suggest gaps in mentoring relationships that cause novice nurse faculty to seek out informal mentors to provide self-identified needs that mentor relationships do not offer.
  - AACN & NLN guidelines recommend a formal orientation and mentoring program as best practices for faculty retention.
- Overall support
  - All three participants shared their valuable experiences of having a circle of support from other novice faculty.
  - The support received from novice faculty is a unique finding, as literature predominantly examines support from administrators on nurse faculty retention.
  - Contrary to literature (Grassley & Lambe, 2015) all study participants did have previous teaching experience.
- Findings are exciting as study participants were younger than the national average of nurse faculty and were highly motivated to provide meaningful and creative experiences for nursing students.
- In contrast, study participants mentioned being in "the right place", "helping me along and wanting me to succeed" and "I love it" in regards to teaching in the classroom.

- Teaching and working with students is a rewarding experience – similar to Goodrich (2014)

Key References