

Sigma's 30th International Nursing Research Congress

The Theory-Practice Link for Beginning Students in the US and UK: A Qualitative Study

Thayer McGahee, PhD, RN

School of Nursing, University of South Carolina Aiken, Aiken, SC, USA

Betty Abraham-Settles, DNP, RN

School of Nursing, University of South Carolina Aiken, Aiken, SC, USA

Nirmala Arunasalam, EdD

Health and Human Science/School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Plymouth, Plymouth, Devon PL3 4RL, United Kingdom

Purpose:

The purpose of this collaborative qualitative research was to examine and explore first year student nurses' view of the influence Link Lecturers at a university in England and clinical professors at a university in the United States have on their theory-practice link. The study also investigated the Link Lecturers' and clinical professors' perspectives of their influence on the theory-practice link with their students.

According to Honkavuo & Lindstrom (2014), clinical teaching is important as it develops students' knowledge and skills in the provision of patient care. Whilst Jackson (2015) and Abbaszade, Borhani and Sabzevari (2013) agree, they also believe it is important to identify the factors that develop student nurses' personal, professional and clinical skills. This collaborative research was instigated when the differences between the role of Link Lecturers in the UK and Clinical Professors in the US and their impact on first year student nurses experiences in practice settings was recognized when the key researcher was on sabbatical leave in the United States.

Methods:

The methodology for this study included convenience sampling of 12 nursing students and 12 faculty members, with the same number included from each of the two universities. Semi-structured interviews using the ZMET or Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (Zaltman, 1997) were conducted with study participants. This is an eleven step in-depth laddering interview technique that elicits both conscious and unconscious thoughts by exploring metaphoric expressions. It enables participants to define, describe, and evaluate their experiences. It was originally developed as a market research tool, but is easily adaptable to diverse experiences, and yields a wealth of information about participants' thoughts about a subject/topic. With this process, guiding question/s are given to participants and they are required to bring images or pictures in relation to their viewpoint. The researcher uses the images or pictures participants bring and utilizes the eleven sequential steps in the ZMET interview protocol to conduct the semi-structured interviews. The steps are designed to elicit participants' hidden and unspoken thoughts and non-rational factors and act as a validation tool against the previous step.

The interpretive paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and the hermeneutic phenomenology design informed by Van Manen (2014) was used as the methodological framework for this qualitative nursing research study. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was chosen because the researchers were interested in the quality of the experiences of nursing students and nursing faculty in making the practice-theory link. They were also interested in discovering similarities and differences between the responses of students and clinical professors in the United States and the students and Link Lecturers in the United Kingdom. IPA uses reflection and evaluation of participants' and researchers' experiences to comprehend the mindset of participants and to make meaning of events or people (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Research questions were formulated, instead of hypotheses, in order to facilitate an open and inductive approach to the data collection and to the data analysis of this study. There was one research question for the nursing students and one for the clinical professors and link lecturers. These guiding research questions were: (a) How do you see your role as a Link Lecturer/ Clinical Professor with your 1st year student nurses in the practice settings? (b) As a student nurse, what do you feel your Link Lecturer/Clinical Professor does with you in the practice setting? These questions are open-ended and intended to facilitate the individual participants' perspectives and to allow the research process to flow individually with each participant.

Results:

Data analysis revealed numerous themes emerging from all four groups of participants. Among the common themes from the Link Lecturers and clinical faculty were 1) promote professional conduct, 2) encourage critical thinking, 3) offer constructive feedback, and 4) help students connect the dots or bridge the gap. Themes common to students in the United States and the United Kingdom were 1) feeling overwhelmed, 2) uncertainty, fear, or anxiety, 3) not enough time, and 4) finally being able to put the puzzle together. Major differences in the themes between students in the two countries were that many students in the UK did not know who their Link Lecturers were, and students in the US felt a lot of encouragement and building of confidence. Some of the differences in themes among the faculty included those in the UK feeling they had no influence on students and faculty in the US feeling they had to wear many hats.

Conclusion:

Conclusions from this study include several implications for educators. Faculty need to be aware of students' anxiety and take opportunities to introduce them to nursing in a supporting, appropriately challenging, and positive way. Face-to-face support, encouragement, and role modeling appear to be as important as the actual teaching of theory and demonstration of skills to help students make the theory-practice link.

Title:

The Theory-Practice Link for Beginning Students in the US and UK: A Qualitative Study

Keywords:

Azleman Metaphor Elicitation Technique, interpretive hermeneutic phenomenology and theory-practice link

References:

Abbaszade A, Borhani F, & Sabzevari S. (2013). Nursing teachers' perception of the challenges of clinical education and solutions: a qualitative study. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Health Sciences*, 2(2): 134–45.

Brocki, J. & Wearden, A. (2006). A critical evaluation of the use of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) in health psychology. *Psychology and Health*, 21 (1), 87-108.

Cellar, B., Rathwell, S., & Young, B. W. (2015). Insights on the process of using IPA in a sport coaching research project. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(2), 63-75.

Denzin N, K., & Lincoln, Y.S., (2014). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Honkavuo, L. & Lindstrom, U.A. (2014). Nurse leaders' responsibilities in supporting nurses experiencing difficult situations in clinical nursing. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 22(1), 117-126.

Jackson, A. (2015). Will the nursing profession survive? *Nurse Educator*, 40(1), 40. Pietkiewicz, I. & Smith, J.A. (2014). A practical guide to using interpretive phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Czasopismo Psychologiczne-Psychological Journal*, 20(1), 7-14.

Plummer, J., Forr, J. and Bressette, K. (2012). Diving deep: Using ZMET to unearth insights about unconscious consumer thinking. In R. Kaden, G. Linda, and M. Prince (Eds.), *Leading edge marketing research: 21st century tools and practices*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.

Smith, J.A. & Osborn, M. (2008). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: a practical guide to research methods*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Van Manen M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing*. Left Coast Press, California.

Zaltman, G. (1997). Breaking out of the box: Meaning and means. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 24, 12-14.

Abstract Summary:

This qualitative research was a collaborative project with faculty in the UK and the US to explore and compare the theory-practice link with beginning nursing students. A unique tool (ZMET) was utilized to guide the interviews of study participants, and interpretive hermeneutic phenomenology provided the framework for interpretation of data.

Content Outline:

I. Introduction

A. Purpose of study

a. Collaborative qualitative research

b. Data collection in US and UK

c. Theory-practice link

II. Methodology

A. Use of the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET)

a. Convenience sampling process

b. Overview of 11 steps of interview technique

B. Guiding questions

a. As a student nurse, what do you feel your Clinical Professor/Link Lecturer does with you in the practice setting?

b. How do you see your role as a Clinical Professor/Link Lecturer with your student nurses in the practice setting?

III. Analysis

A. Interpretive hermeneutic phenomenology (IPA)

B. Emerging themes

C. A picture is worth a thousand words

IV. Results

A. Similarities between groups of students and faculty

B. Differences between groups of students and faculty

C. Implications for further research

D. Implications for educators

First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author

Thayer McGahee, PhD, RN
University of South Carolina Aiken
School of Nursing
Dean & Associate Professor
School of Nursing
Aiken SC
USA

Author Summary: Dr. Thayer McGahee has over 35 years of professional experience as a nurse, in both clinical and academic arenas. She is currently Dean of the School of Nursing at the University of South Carolina Aiken. She is involved in collaborative research with faculty in a nursing school in England, and most of her recent research involves student outcomes, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Second Secondary Presenting Author

Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author

Betty Abraham-Settles, DNP, RN
University of South Carolina Aiken
School of Nursing
Assistant Professor
School of Nursing
Aiken SC
USA

Author Summary: Dr. Abraham-Settles is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of South Carolina Aiken. She is working collaboratively on research with faculty at her university and at a university in England.

Third Secondary Presenting Author

Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author

Nirmala Arunasalam, EdD
University of Plymouth
Health and Human Science/School of Nursing and Midwifery
Lecturer
Drake Circus, University of Plymouth
Plymouth, Devon
United Kingdom

Author Summary: Dr. Mala Arunasalam is a nursing academic in the University of Plymouth, Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and affiliate of Regents University London. She serves on the Editorial Board of the Border Crossing Journal and is an organising committee member for The Migration Conference. Her research interests focus on the Internationalisation of Higher Education, intercultural communication, and the theory-practice connection grounded on evidence based teaching and the realities of practice.