

Sigma's VIRTUAL 31st International Nursing Research Congress (Wednesday, 22 July - Friday, 24 July)

Using Experiential Learning Techniques to Engage and Grow Future Nursing Educators

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Purpose: The impact of nursing faculty shortages can contribute to the limited expansion of nursing programs and quality nursing curriculum. Nurses working in various roles have been engaging in different levels of educating as part of their daily responsibilities, ranging from educating patients about the management of illnesses to orienting and precepting nursing students. In addition, one of the key competencies of advanced practice nurses and graduate-degree prepared nurses is applying teaching/learning principles in work with patients and students across the continuum of care in a variety of settings. Master's and Doctoral programs in nursing are the essential incubators to foster the growth of future nursing educators and faculty. Promoting graduate students' interests in nursing education and building preparation in teaching methodologies, educational needs assessment, and learner-centered theories and methods can contribute to the growth of the potential future nursing educators. This presentation summarized a pedagogical design to enhance graduate students' learning opportunities in developing their educational principles and teaching methods.

Methods: Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory was used as the guiding principles to design learning activities of a graduate course of nursing education principles and technology. This pedagogical design was used in 2018 and 2019 for multiple sections of the course. The class size ranged from 20 to 30 graduate students in one class section.

Results: In addition to introducing evidence-based literature related to nursing education, various hands-on projects were used as course assignments. Through these activities, students explored the theoretical foundations and processes in developing their instructional materials, teaching plan, and evaluation technique of their chosen topic and clinical population. Students then combined these short activities and demonstrated them into a mock teaching session. Exposure to the use of audio-visual media was also practiced in a teaching video making activity. A teaching portfolio was integrated as the final reflective activity.

Conclusion: Being an effective nurse educator requires an additional set of pedagogic knowledge and skills. Experiential learning has been historically used as a framework to integrate hands-on learning activities to enhance skill acquisition and clinical practice in medical and nursing education. By combining the experiential learning principles in the course design as demonstrated in this presentation, exposing graduate students to opportunities in assessing learning needs and designing teaching activities early on in their graduate program studies can encourage them develop interest and self-efficacy in participating in the roles and functions related to nursing academic and clinical education, and most likely, becoming nursing faculty in the future.

Title:

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Keywords:

experiential learning, nursing education and workforce development

Abstract Summary:

This presentation summarized a pedagogical design by incorporating experiential learning to enhance graduate students' learning opportunities in developing their own educational principles and teaching methods. This approach fosters graduate students' interests in nursing education and building preparation in becoming future nurse educators.

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Author Summary: I have been an academic educator for 15 years. Currently, I teach in the graduate program and serve as the Assistant Director for Graduate Programs. I also had served as the chapter president of STTI and coordinator for the Oncology Nursing Society.