ADAPT OR SINK: EXPLORING THE NURSE EDUCATOR-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP IN DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA

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Disclosure

1. Author Name: Theresa Sheila Mokoboto-Zwane

2. Learner Objectives:
   • To provide insight into the nurse educator-student relationship in the context of the new democratic dispensation in South Africa.
   • To urge policy-makers to introduce programmes that promote adaptation to changes brought about by socio-economic and political transformation in South Africa.

3. My employer is UNISA and this study is my own work. I have no conflict of interest and have received no sponsorship to conduct the study.

4. I thank UNISA for sponsoring my conference attendance.
2. Background and Context

• The Republic of South Africa is situated at the southern tip of Africa
• Pretoria (where UNISA is situated), is the administrative capital
2. Background and Context (continued)

- The population size is 51.77 million people, as per the latest census (2011).
- It is a federal state with nine provinces and 11 official languages; English is the business language.
- Gauteng is the smallest province, situated in the centre of the country.
- Gauteng, where the study was conducted, is the main hub of economic activity.
- South Africa got its independence in 1994.
- Until then, it had been experiencing oppression and discrimination by the apartheid system for over 300 years.
- The country is now enjoying democracy, having had 5 national elections.
3. Statement Of The Research Problem

- South Africa has been in a state of transformation for the past 20yrs.
- Since independence, the South African Nursing Council (SANC) has been under immense pressure to Africanize, to democratize, to become more transparent and to repudiate the apartheid past.
- Following the introduction of democracy in 1994, anxiety, fear and uncertainty gripped the South African society.
- Similarly, anxiety, fear and uncertainty gripped the Nursing Education fraternity as well, especially nurse educators and students.
- The nurse educator-student relationship broke down almost irretrievably.

N.B. The terms “nurse educator” and “tutor” were used interchangeably, in this study.
4. Purpose Of The Study

To explore and describe the nurse educator-student relationship in a nursing college in Gauteng, within the context of a new democracy in South Africa.

5. Objectives Of The Study

• Exploration and description of nurse educators’ experience of relating with students
• Exploration and description of nursing students’ experience of relating with nurse educators (tutors)
6. Methodology

- All relevant permission was secured
- Noteworthy: participating students sought permission from the SRC (Students’ Representative Council), as well – for political expediency/correctness
- A qualitative design using purposive sampling, was utilized.
- In-depth phenomenological interviews were used to collect data.
- 19 Participants (10 tutors and 9 students) were interviewed until no new themes emerged (data saturation).
6. Methodology (continued)

- A central question, “Please describe how you experience relationships with your students/tutors (including attitudes and feelings towards them),” was used in piloting the study.
- The same question was used in subsequent interviews since it elicited the information required.
- Interview transcripts and field notes were analysed using Tesch’s method.
# 7. Results

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Nursing Students</th>
<th>Nurse Educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Enhancers:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1. Pos. Attitude</td>
<td>&quot;Because their attitude towards us is good, it makes me look forward to the next day of class.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2. Pos. Interaction</td>
<td>&quot;I feel proud of my tutors because during our interaction, they make me feel free and enjoy the course.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3. Pos. Feelings</td>
<td>&quot;Because the tutors are open, understanding and supportive, interacting with them makes me feel good.&quot;</td>
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### 7. Results (continued)

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. Obstacles:</td>
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<td>2.1. Neg. Attitude</td>
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<td>2.2. Neg. Interaction</td>
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<td>3. Variable:</td>
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<td>3.1. Two students reported that their relationship with tutors was subject to variations under certain circumstances.</td>
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<td>3.2. Variable relationships were predominant in the narratives by tutors, who cited different behaviour under different circumstances.</td>
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8. Conclusion

- Changing times call for new strategies and tactics.
- Nursing Education Administration should get unstuck and focus on the interplay between politics, democracy and transparency on the one hand, and effective nursing education, human rights and support on the other.
- Both tutors and students need to respect one another.
- Tutors need to change mindsets regarding being the sole custodians of all knowledge, whilst students assume a passive stance and acquiesce to academic demands without questioning.
- However, both groups need all the support they can garner.
9. Recommendations

• First and foremost, tutors should adapt their attitudes towards students.
• Tutors should adapt their communication style, i.e. talk with, and not down at students.
• Maintaining confidentiality of student matters where necessary, would improve trust issues.
• Strong emotional and professional support for tutors, e.g. regular group debriefing sessions will go a long way.
• Special coaching and mentoring sessions for tutors to be put in place and time set aside for them to attend these.
• Most importantly, future studies should focus on transforming the curriculum to accommodate relevant political content given the rapidly changing political landscape.
Limitations

- Study was conducted in an urban area of one province only.

- The possibility of expanding to other provinces, especially those with a rural slant, was not explored.

- The study did not explore the role/influence of gender differences between tutors and students – it’s possible this could have yielded different and interesting dynamics.
Thank you