Transition to Practice After Participation in a Student Nurse Associate Program: A Qualitative Study

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Conflict of Interest and Disclosure

The author, Kathleen Hopkins, Ed.D, RN, CNE has no real or perceived vested interest that relates to this presentation.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize major concepts related to transition support programs for new graduate nurses
- Develop awareness of the effectiveness of pre-licensure support programs
- Identify components of an effective transition support program

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Introduction

New graduate nurses entering the workforce are often challenged as they transition into practice

- 25% of new graduate nurses leave their first place of employment in the first year of practice (NCSBN, 2013)

- Complex healthcare system with rapid changes

- Advanced technology

Issues Facing New Graduates

Readiness To Practice
- Limited clinical experiences in school
- Swift entry into practice (computerized testing)
- Lack of skills, confidence, and critical thinking abilities
- High turnover rates (30-69%)
- Increased costs associated with attrition ($148,000/new grad)
- Career choice questioned- dissatisfaction with nursing

Transition Support Programs
Recommended by: IOM, NCSBN, and The Joint Commission

NCSBN vision: Every new graduate will complete a hospital based transition support program before or during their first employment as a RN

- Post-licensure Programs(Residency, Internship) predominate
- Pre-licensure Programs (Externship, Apprenticeship)starting to emerge

Rationale

- Transition shock- an issue for many years- progressively more common
  - Kramer's work (1974)
  - Grave consequences- 40% medication errors attributed to new graduates (NCSBN, 2013)
  - New graduates frequently cite:
    - lack of confidence, increased stress/anxiety
- Recommendations set forth by national agencies
- Personal experience with new graduates adapting to professional practice

Significance

- 500,000 nurses will be needed in the US workforce by 2025

- More than 55,000 nurses will retire by 2022

- Novice nurses need to be prepared to assume positions

NCSBN research ➡ healthcare facilities with transition support programs help prepare graduates for practice
- Decreased attrition/improved retention
- Improved patient outcomes

Literature Review

Reviewed > 100 sources from 1974-2015

- Subsets emerged:
  - Recommended by national organizations
  - Historical perspective of issues related to transition to practice
  - Readiness to Practice- Kramer's "Reality Shock"
  - Post-licensure vs pre-licensure programs
  - Outcomes of programs
  - Responsibility �'); Academia or Practice ?

Summary of Literature Review

- Literature focuses primarily on post-licensure programs ⇨ often more costly and time consuming
  - Traditional orientation vs Transition support

- Who is responsible? Academia or Practice ⇨ Collaboration Ideal

- Outcomes ➕ positive for all stakeholders: the new graduate, the organization, and the patient- despite costs $$

Focus of Study

Pre-licensure Student Nurse Associate Program (SNAP)

- Paid work experience the summer between junior and senior year of a baccalaureate nursing program
- Not-for-profit, community, Magnet designated hospital in northeast US

Research Questions

1. What has been your experience as a RN in clinical practice after completing the SNAP? Please describe your first six months in practice.

2. How did the SNAP affect your transition to practice?

3. What key components do you believe should be incorporated in the SNAP to facilitate a smooth transition to practice?

4. Is there anything more you would like to tell me regarding your experience in the SNAP?

Study's Framework

Husserl (1970)
- Subjective experience is of extreme value
- Lived experience ➡ fundamental source of knowledge.
- Major assumption ➡ people can only know what they experience by focusing in their conscious awareness.
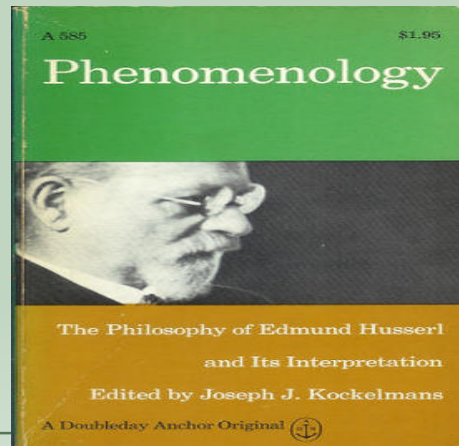
Limitations/ Assumptions

- Inclusion criteria ∴ SNAP students are higher achievers ⇨ motivated, eager with demonstrated academic success
  - GPA requirement (3.2 or higher)
  - Nursing Professor recommendation
- Prior experiences in healthcare
  - Paid work or senior year clinical
  - experiences
- Geographical location may limit diversity of participants (northeast US)
- Educational levels- study focused solely on BSN graduates assumption ⇨ they have had comparable experiences

Description of Sample

12 nurses participated in the study
- 10 female/2 male
- Age: 22 -33 years, average 25.3 years
- RN >3months; <3years

- 66.6% described race/ethnicity as Caucasian
- 33.3% identified as African American
- 91.6% passed NCLEX-RN on first attempt
- 66.6% work FT day shift; 33.3% work FT night shift
- 58.3% had previous paid work in acute care

Major Themes Emerged

1. **Confidence:** *Growth during the program*
2. **Delegation:** *A difficult challenge*
3. **Communication:** *Learning how to interact with patients, families, and other healthcare professionals*
4. **Competence:** *Perfecting basic skills*
5. **Time Management:** *Developing organizational systems*
6. **Work Environment:** *Learning the policies, practices, and people*
7. **Prioritization:** *Critical thinking in action*
8. **Collaboration:** *Becoming a team player*
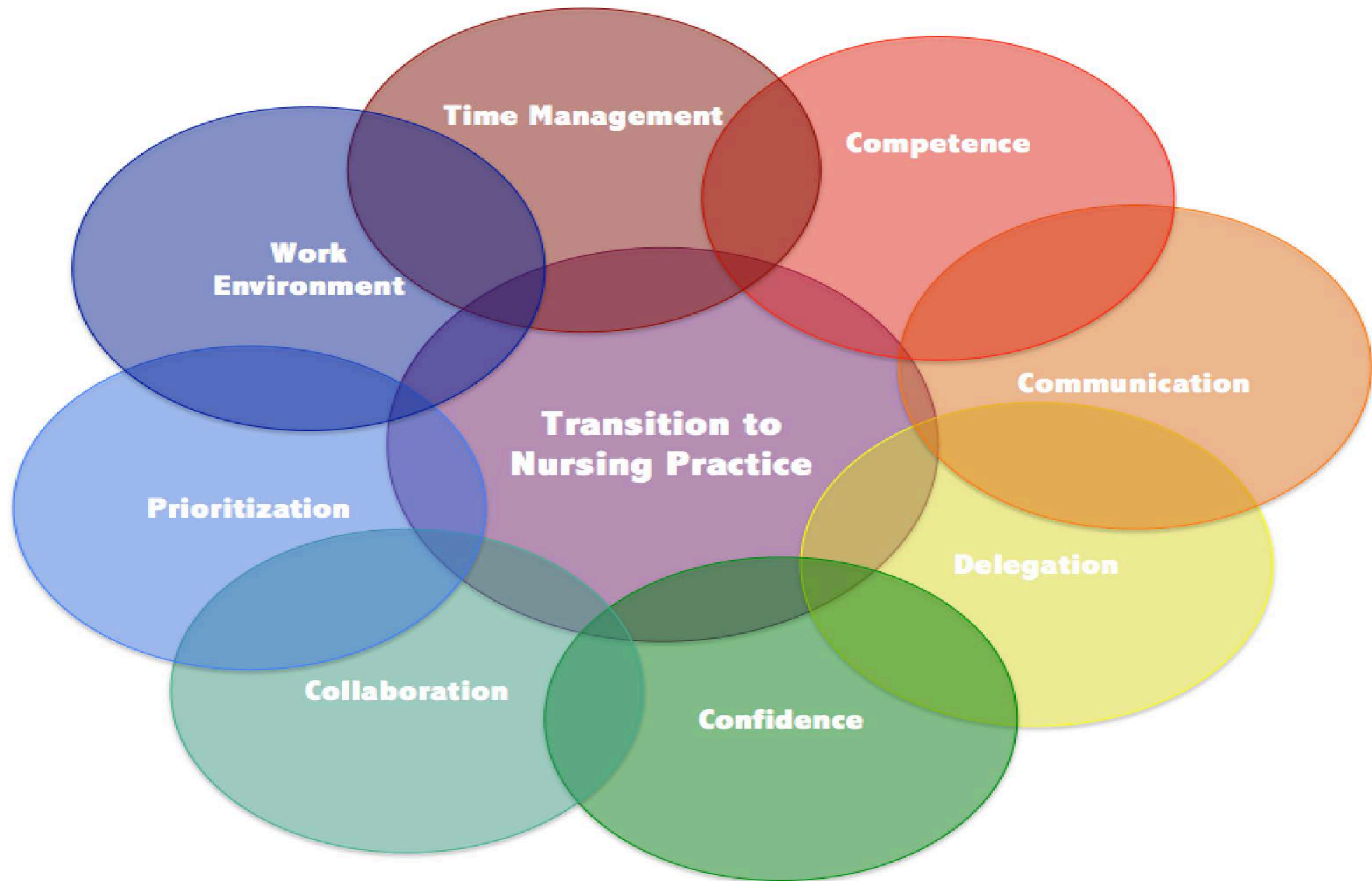
Skills Mastered in SNAP vs Challenges

Skills Mastered

- Confidence
- Communication
- Competence
- Time Management
- Work Environment
- Collaboration

Major Challenges

- Delegation
- Prioritization

Confidence: Growth During the Program

- Self-assurance ⇨ stress minimized
- Initial feelings of insecurity - developed level of comfort
- Awareness of general policies/practices/ layout of facility
- Developed autonomy and independence during program, they did not have in school
- Able to interact with patients without fear or teacher intimidation
- Consistent, daily exposure reduced stress (as opposed to weekly clinical)
- As result of SNAP, confidence was also enhanced in their senior year of nursing school

Delegation: A Difficult Challenge

- Difficult concept to conquer
  - "Easier to do myself"
  - "Don't want to bother people"
  - Previously worked with nursing technicians as summer associate
  - Younger nurses working with older, seasoned nursing technicians
- Most challenging skill to develop as RN
- Took most time to learn as RN
- Learned by observing experienced RNs

Communication: Learning How to Interact With Patients, Families, and Other HCP

- Reported significant initial difficulty introducing self to patients and families

- Intimidated communications with medical staff

- Routine, consistent interactions afforded multiple opportunities to practice and perfect

- Comfort level developed → communication with many employees due to the day-to-day contact with other departments

Competence: Perfecting Basic Skills

- Able to perfect basic nursing skills as a summer associate, could focus on advanced skills as RN

- Comfortable with technology after daily exposure
  - Informatics (documentation in EMR), bar-coding, automated dispensing systems

- Able to integrate previously learned knowledge from school with clinical practice

- Many reported a more productive clinical experience in senior year which was complemented by faculty

Time Management:
Developing Organizational Systems

- Improvement reported over time spent as an associate
- Full patient assignment on daily basis- had to organize self for shift
- Observed/learned from professional nursing staff
- Learned the regimen of nurses – choose nurses they considered to be role models

# *Collaboration: Becoming a Team Player*

- Developed sense of teamwork with nursing techs, unit clerks, other nurses
- Worked with many different members of the healthcare team
- Continued, daily exposure to other departments, people
- Preceptors/"Shadow a Nurse"- a valued part of process

Work Environment: Learning the Policies, Practices, and People

Healthy work environment: "Place of physical, mental, and social well-being which supports optimal health and safety in safe atmosphere" (ANA, 2015)

- Able to learn the culture of the organization
- Familiarity was reassuring
- Surrounded by supportive people
- Program Coordinators helpful
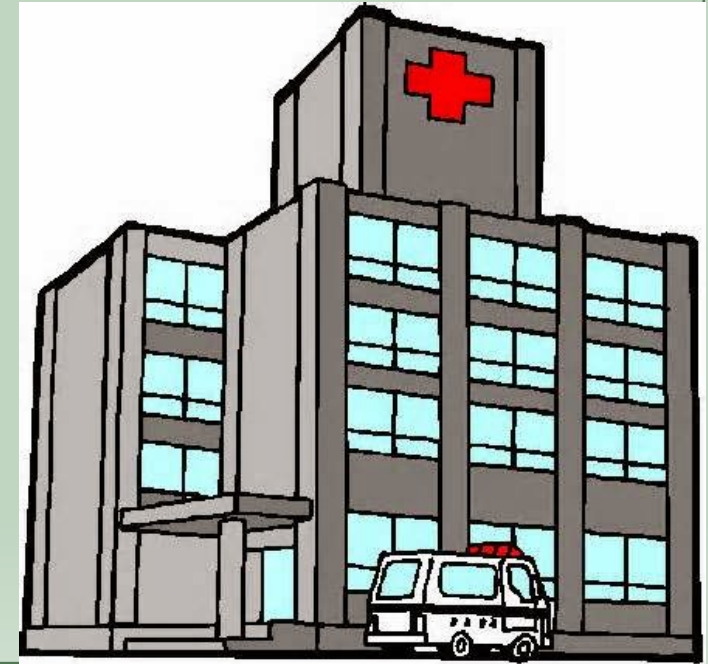
Prioritization: Critical Thinking In Action

- Extremely challenging for new nurses
- Often felt overwhelmed/inadequate
- Exposed to complex clinical situations
- Eventually learned by observing role model nurses
- Took time working as RN to perfect

Conclusions

- Study yielded a wealth of information about the experiences new nurses encounter during the transition period

- Pre-licensure programs are beneficial to both new nurses and hospitals

  - Cost-effective option

  - Facilitates recruitment and retention of quality staff

  - Added benefit of program ➯ guaranteed employment as RN

Future Research Opportunities

- Replicate study using larger, more diverse sample/ location
- Explore NCLEX-RN pass rates after pre-licensure program
- Educational levels (BSN vs ADN)
  - Address the gap between academia and practice
- Cost analysis comparing pre/post licensure programs
- Compare experiences in Magnet hospital vs non Magnet organizations
- Longitudinal study examining nurses satisfaction with career choice

*"So never lose an opportunity of urging
a practical beginning,
however small, for it is wonderful how
often in such matters the
mustard-seed germinates and roots itself."*

-Florence Nightingale