Mentoring: Creating a Healthy Environment for the Global Development of Novice Nurse Educators

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Disclosure Statement

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We both declare no conflict of interest with this presentation.
Objectives

- Identify challenges that experienced clinicians encounter while transitioning to the new role of clinical nurse educator.
- Identify characteristics of a healthy academic environment that fosters effective mentoring and support for novice educators.
- Discuss specific mentoring strategies that provide a supportive environment for expert clinicians to gain self-confidence and learn new skills for their new role as clinical nurse educators.
Challenges

- Critical shortage of nurse educators, which limits the number of nursing applicants that can be admitted to schools of nursing in both the United States and abroad.
- Novice clinical nurse educators have expressed frustration and a sense of being overwhelmed.
- Research findings from novice nurse educators in a Clinical Nurse Educator Academy will be discussed.
- Findings suggest mentoring strategies are important in helping to create a healthy academic environment for novice nurse educators.
Challenges of an Unhealthy Academic Environment

• Have you ever worked in an Unhealthy Academic Environment??
A nurse participant in our research study:

“Please mentor me. Don’t just orient me!”

Mentoring is essential in the fast-paced health care environment where nurses often assume new roles with little formal preparation.

Lack of self-confidence in a new role can lead to frustration and withdrawal, creating increased costs for the institution and dissatisfaction for nurses themselves.
Mentoring is a critical element in the establishment of a healthy academic environment and a specific catalyst in the global development of novice nurse educators.
Research Study: Clinicians learning new roles as clinical nurse educators

Study framed within a Clinical Nurse Educator Academy

• Designed to prepare experienced clinicians for new roles as part-time or full-time clinical nurse educators

Explored process of nurses moving from “expert to novice” (Benner, 1984)

• Data collection through written narratives of nurses enrolled in the Academy
Research Question

• How can narratives of clinicians participating in a Clinical Nurse Educator Academy enhance understanding of the unique perspectives of these individuals as they prepare for roles as clinical nurse educators?
Design & Method

• Two 4-day Clinical Nurse Educator Academies
• Only reflective papers from participants who signed the informed consent included in data analysis
• Nine students from 1st Academy and 36 from the 2nd Academy participated. Each participant wrote 3 reflective papers (N=135)
Data Collection

Three reflective papers focused on the following questions:

- Describe an incident that reflects your concerns about moving from the clinician to the clinical nurse educator role.
- Describe an incident that reflects your ideas about how you can make a difference for students as they learn new clinical skills.
- Describe an incident that reflects your ideas about what you need from a mentor as you move to a new role as clinical nurse educator.
Data Generation & Analysis

• Reflective journey papers analyzed at the end of each Academy

• Each paper generated memorable reflections of “good” and “bad” experiences as preceptors and/or novice educators

• Research team developed categories from the data through online discussion & face-to-face meetings
Data Generation & Analysis

• Interpretive phenomenology was used to identify categories and themes.

• Individual words, sentences, and phrases were studied for meanings, differences, and commonalities.

• Many themes were related to the academic work environment that novice educators encountered.
The Overarching Pattern

Phenomenon of Learning to Teach
Buckle your Seatbelt

I am buckling my seatbelt to explore the educator’s role. It is a short distance ride. However the next ride could possibly be with an educator in the driver’s seat; my seatbelt will still be needed but I will further investigate to ascertain other items to take on the trip.

Melody
Buckle your Seatbelt

What I fear most has to do with the discomfort of feeling totally inadequate. I felt as though the expectation was that I should be the “expert” on each medication, and I just wasn’t. I really hate feeling stupid, and that’s exactly how I felt in that situation.

Sabrina
Buckle your Seatbelt

If I could only use one word to describe my move from a role as a clinician to a nurse educator, it would have to be fear... I don’t believe I had any idea of what a full time educator’s role was.

Fiona
Buckle your Seatbelt

When I was offered the position [of clinical nurse educator], it both excited and delighted me, but also terrified me. I was leaving my comfort zone and entering new waters.  

Karen

I am compelled to address my own crisis of confidence as a nursing professional…How will I deal with being a novice again?

Linda
I have been a nurse for 32 years. I have been a novice many times. I have been an expert a few times...*Being a novice makes me feel young*...I allow myself to be a novice, to not know everything and to learn from others and the job itself.

April
I must admit that as I have matured in this profession, sometimes I like being a novice. It means there is so much more knowledge out there for me to obtain. And if we think about it, you really can’t be an expert and be an educator. Learning is continuous and it is life-long. That’s what I love about education. I aspire to not only be an educator, but a life-long learner as well.

Lynn
I had forgotten how anxious students are about accomplishing simple tasks. I was forced to begin thinking about nursing from the novice point of view. The observations and conclusions made on a daily basis by seasoned nurses are not something that can be taught in a four hour clinical…. If we put ourselves in the place of the student and remember what is was like for us, we have an opportunity to make a huge difference in a student nurse’s professional journey. Eileen
Embracing the Novice

We all must remember that we also were novices once. Those that took the time to nurture and mentor us have done us a great service; moreover, they are the reason why we stuck it out through rough times and helped us to learn to love the nursing profession.

Ellyn

Honor the knowledge they [students] bring with them; nourish the teachable spirit; role model the behavior you hope to inspire in them; think out loud; **affirm their success**.

Joyce
Mentoring in the Dark

Not knowing what I should know about clinical education was a bit like playing pin the tail on the donkey. I realize now that I didn’t know enough to ask meaningful questions …

Cara
Mentoring in the Dark

Most [preceptors] are just thrown into the situation and expected to do well since they are usually very competent in their practice...Looking back at the situation, I was really not prepared to be a preceptor...I did the best job I knew how to, but there was no formal training for me.

Francis

I was left on my own to teach subject matters I was not very comfortable with, and trying to figure out how to teach.

Ruth
So now in my role as Educator, I find myself “muddling” through, so to speak, trying to figure out the difference and help people learn… As a novice Educator I hadn’t dug more into objectives, goals and curriculum. In my haste to be helpful…, I hadn’t asked the right questions.

Kelly
I know I need a mentor who truly respects me. I need a mentor who encourages me. I need a mentor who serves as my role model. One who affirms that what I do is meaningful, effective, and valid. I need a mentor who helps me to help myself.

Jill
“Please mentor me! Don’t just orient me.”
Those that orient me will play an integral part in my success as a new clinical educator and I will greatly appreciate their efforts. However, I know that I will want (and need) ongoing support, encouragement and expert guidance along my career journey. I will surely need a mentor …

Rex
Implications and Recommendations

The vulnerable students that are just barely surviving can easily fall through the cracks and get written off by other educators. These are the students that disappear – just stop showing up to class one day or don’t show up the next semester. As educators, we could have made a difference for these students, but we didn’t, and now we have a few less future nurses.

Callie
What is a Healthy Academic Environment??

• How can we keep novice nurse educators from falling through the cracks?
Implications and Recommendations

• The phenomenon of *learning to teach* revealed in these themes is multifaceted.

• Research is needed to investigate strategies that facilitate development of a healthy academic environment that supports novice nurse educators.

• Open discussion and dialogue is desirable to light the path during the process of *learning to teach.*
Learning to Teach

If we provide an enabling environment, then it is my strong belief that novice educators will blossom and will be great assets for that school. If a university wants excellence from their teachers, then university faculty have to spend time and find out what novice teachers need and work on it. We cannot use trial and error theory with our new faculty and students because chances are it can fail both of them.

Estelle
Mentoring throughout a career

Relationship-based mentoring shapes a career.

*We are creatures of community. Those individuals, societies, and cultures who learned to take care of each other, to love each other, and to nurture relationships with each other during the past several hundred thousand years were more likely to survive than those who did not.*

- Dean Ornish, *Love and Survival*, p. 12
Relationship-based Mentoring

- Mentor/mentee relationship – identifying needs
- Relationship with selves – changes over time
- Relationship with friends, family, and colleagues – fitting the mentoring relationship into busy lives
Questions?
References
