Personal Disposition and With-It-Ness in the Nursing Classroom: Implications for the Science of Nursing Education

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Session Title:
"What Did That Mean?" An Examination of Personal Disposition in Nursing Education and Practice

Slot:
F 10: Friday, 28 July 2017: 2:30 PM-3:45 PM

Scheduled Time:
2:30 PM

Keywords:
disposition, science of nursing education and with-it-ness

References:


Abstract Summary:
Disposition represents the sum of one's personal values, commitments, beliefs, and professional ethics. It influences the way a faculty member views teaching and learning, and the quality of responses of involved students. The notion of disposition holds particular significance for advancing the science of nursing education.
Learning Activity:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE</th>
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<td>Recognize the implications of interpersonal dynamics in classrooms as ‘ecological</td>
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<td>entities.’</td>
<td>Examine how dispositions, i.e., values, commitments, beliefs, and professional ethics, of both faculty members and students meld in the classroom to establish the classroom as a unique entity.</td>
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<td>Examine the ways personal disposition and ‘with-it-ness’ interact in the classroom to shape outcomes.</td>
<td>Discuss the importance of understanding personal viewpoints regarding self as teacher and students as learners as this understanding influences effective classroom interaction. Examine how ‘with--it-ness' is established, including what issues are involved in with-it-ness and how it shapes the primary intervention in nursing education, i.e., teaching for learning.</td>
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<td>Discuss disposition and with-it-ness as concepts essential to the science of nursing education.</td>
<td>Describe the relevance of the notions of disposition and with-it-ness to the science of nursing education, specifically as these notions characterize essential aspects of nursing education, itself an intervention geared toward influencing student learning.</td>
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Abstract Text:

Purpose:

The goal of the investigators in conducting this study was to examine evidence of the importance of two notions--personal disposition and with-it-ness, a term coined in the early 80s--to improved understanding of the science undergirding nursing education. The metasyntheses conducted for this study lay the groundwork for understanding how nursing education is effectively carried out in the classroom. The act of educating is the primary intervention for the science of nursing education. Because the terms personal disposition and with-it-ness address nursing education's essential, interpersonal nature, they serve to characterize nursing education in action. As individuals work in a classroom environment together, disposition acts across individuals, as emerging group dynamics generate a gestalt that characterizes the group as a whole, interweaving people and their values in relationship. With-it-ness moves that established relationship forward. The investigators’ systematic review of literature and identification of emergent concepts and themes suggests that because they necessarily commingle in every classroom setting, disposition and with-it-ness serve as core concepts for the science undergirding nursing education.

Methods:

Using metasynthesis, the investigators identified concepts and themes from published literature to ascertain the relevance of the notions of personal disposition and with-it-ness in nursing classrooms, to identify whether those terms are found in descriptions and examples within the science of nursing education. Disposition can be defined as the sum of one’s personal values, commitments, beliefs, and professional ethics. Disposition acts across individuals, as emerging group dynamics act collectively to
meld individual students and faculty into a collective whole, a single entity. With-it-ness is defined as deep understanding of what’s going on in a classroom environment. With-it-ness incorporates a faculty member’s understanding of the feelings, apprehensions, and expectations of students, as well as awareness of students’ prior knowledge and preparation for class. It involves a grasping of the classroom gestalt, recognizing what is transpiring in the classroom from moment to moment, predicting where discussion will go in the future, and dealing with the emotions of the students working there. Because in nursing education, learning stakes are high, requiring students’ enhancement of skills in ethical decision-making, their personal refinement of professional values, and their development of identity through a focus on knowledge rather than tasks (Andrew, et al., 2009), nurse educators are particularly challenged to recognize and understand their own dispositions and to be with-it. The notions emerging from this perspective on classroom dynamics hold particular significance for advancing the science of nursing education: simply delivering content, in the tradition of the ‘sage on the stage,’ is inadequate to successful teaching, especially in fields such as nursing where not only information, but an array of skills and professional values, is on the line.

Results:

Analyses demonstrated that as both concepts--personal disposition and with-it-ness--address ‘ways of seeing’ in the classroom, they shape the character of the work faculty and students will do together. Study findings highlight the relevance of both notions to the activities and scholarship inherent in teaching and learning in nursing. Snow noted that student learning is inextricably linked to faculty learning. Without strong foundations in the science undergirding nursing education, as those foundations guide faculty learning, the quality of student learning will certainly diminish. Findings demonstrate that the most with-it teachers are aware not only of student dispositions, but of their own dispositions, as well. From that highly-informed perspective, and recognizing how meaning emerges between themselves and the classroom ecology, the best nursing faculty are able to maximize student outcomes, class by class, and course by course, responding with comprehensive awareness to student needs and to the needs of the classroom as a whole. Truly with-it nurse educators will effectively contribute to maximizing student outcomes, and ultimately to graduates’ performance in professional practice, enhancing not only the skills and expertise of graduates, but contributing understanding of educational interventions that will support graduates’ success.

Conclusion:

For several decades, nursing’s professional focus has been dedicated to the evidence-base undergirding clinical practice; nursing education, as a focus in its own right, has been broadly overlooked. This presentation provides evidence, derived from published literature, supporting the significance of personal disposition and with-it-ness to advancing the science of nursing education, serving to illustrate the relevance of both notions to the activities and scholarship inherent in teaching and learning in nursing. Nurse educators are particularly challenged to be with-it. They are required to recognize and predict how students’ understanding and personal dispositions will shape personal and professional responses to the challenges of successful nursing practice. Understanding how disposition and with-it-ness shape education interventions, nurse educators can use their underlying science to good effect.