Promoting Faculty Competence, Satisfaction and Retention: Faculty Stories Supporting the Crucial Need for Mentoring When Evaluating Nursing Students [1,2]

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ABSTRACT

Although mentoring has been touted as an effective strategy to retain nursing faculty, there is a paucity of literature regarding the need for mentoring when conducting evaluation. This manuscript presents a Heideggerian hermeneutical phenomenological study that sought to reveal the experiences of nursing faculty when evaluating prelicensure students. While several themes emerged, this article will address the theme of *mentoring*. Implications for nursing faculty and administrators will be discussed.

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Introduction

The need for mentoring faculty has been well established in the literature (Candela, Gutierrez, & Keating, 2015; Chung & Kowalski, 2012; Conn, 2013; Feldman, Greenberg, Jaffe-Ruiz, Kaufman, & Cignarale, 2015; Slimmer, 2012; White, Brannan, & Wilson, 2010). While these authors discuss how mentoring can improve teaching, very few even mention how it can also enhance effective evaluation. In this study, faculty were asked to share stories of their experiences when evaluating nursing students. The teachers repeatedly spoke about how difficult learning was to effectively evaluate nursing student performance in both the classroom and clinical arenas. As the participants told stories of evaluation, they were asked to include specific narratives about what was helpful and not helpful to them. Although many themes emerged, this article will address the theme, *mentoring*. Specifically, the authors will discuss how having a mentor helped by engendering community and how not having a mentor or having a mentor who did not have time to spend with them a hindrance to effective evaluation.

Review of the Literature

Nurse educators need to be proficient in the assessment and evaluation of students. The National League for Nursing (2012) identified experience in evaluation as an essential skill for nurse educators. However, many nurse educators report difficulty evaluating students both in the clinical arena and the classroom (Deegan, Rebeiro, & Burton, 2012; Gordon & Fay, 2010; Jervis & Tilki, 2011; Rankin, Malinsky, Tate, & Elena, 2010; Schutz, Drake, & Lessner, 2013).

In their study about assigning failing grades to nursing students, Poorman and Mastorovich (2014) reported one faculty member seriously considered resigning because of the difficulty regarding evaluation issues with students. Other faculty in this study related fear of physical violence from students and their families when the students failed. If faculty choose to leave nursing education because of the problems associated with evaluating students, this may compound the ever-present nursing shortage.

Although there are many reasons cited for the current nursing shortage, a national news agency recently reported that there are not enough educators to accommodate people who want to join the nursing profession (Kahen-Kashi, 2014). According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 68,938 qualified applicants were turned away from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in

2014 due in part to a lack of qualified faculty. They further discuss that there were over 1,200 faculty vacancies in 714 nursing schools across the United States. These same schools projected a need to create 124 new faculty positions to fulfill student needs (Rosseter, 2015).

A major goal for the profession of nursing is quickly becoming the recruitment and retention of nursing faculty. According to Slimmer (2012), mentoring is the most significant way to grow and nurture nurse educators. In 2012, Tourangeau et al. sought to identify factors that influence why nurse educators remain in or leave a faculty position. While these authors identified many factors that influence faculty retention, a theme that has been echoed by other researchers is work environment and organizational support. The participants related that deans and directors who showed their support through mutual respect, being approachable, accommodating, and providing consistent direction and feedback created environments where faculty wanted to stay. Conversely, leaders who did not assign workload fairly and lacked appreciation for their faculty promoted a milieu in which the participants believed that they were devalued and disrespected. Unfortunately, this can lead to incivility among faculty. Clark, Olender, Kenski, and Cardoni (2013) investigated the phenomenon of faculty-to-faculty incivility. In this study of 588 faculty from 40 different states, workload inequity was a key factor leading to incivility. Further, a lack of administrator support was found to be a major reason that the incivility continued.

Administrative support was also identified by Candela, Gutierrez, and Keating (2013) as a reason for staying in a faculty position. They conducted a national survey of 808 nurse educators in the United States. Specifically, they examined faculty member's work life in order to provide a supportive environment for recruiting and retaining nursing faculty. The multiple roles of teaching, service, and maintaining clinical expertise and scholarship can lead to increased faculty stress. The nurse educator's workload is becoming increasingly complex, and expectations of faculty members can lead to role conflict. According to Pishgooie, Rahimi, and Khaghanizadeh (2014), role conflict is normal and expected in educational institutions. However their review of the literature also found that it could lead to decreased job satisfaction, frustration, burnout and, ultimately, the quality of teaching. Candela et al. (2013) suggest that academic nurse administrators can positively influence job satisfaction and intent to remain in faculty jobs by recognizing teaching expertise, supporting the need to attend workshops, and using consultants with expertise in particular areas around teaching and evaluation. In a more recent publication, Candela et al. (2015) discussed the need for faculty to have meaningful time to develop, deliver, and evaluate their courses. When faculty were not only supported by their administrators but also viewed themselves as expert teachers, they were more likely to stay in the faculty role. Another noteworthy finding was that nursing faculty members' age influenced whether they intended to stay or leave their faculty role. Faculty members from the baby boomer generation who had been educators for a long period of time were more inclined to stay in the faculty role. Unfortunately, the nursing faculty from the millennial generation were more inclined to leave. Candela et al. (2013) suggest novice faculty be supported through mentorship programs and a decreased teaching load during the first academic year. Mentorship of new faculty is not only necessary for full-time educators but also part-time clinical faculty. Carlson (2015) examined the characteristics that influenced part-time clinical faculty to remain in their positions. This national study included 553 participants. Although there were many reasons cited for staying in their position, having a mentor was ranked fourth. One participant was quoted, "I have an amazing mentor and she is the only reason why I am here." It is clear that mentorship in nursing education is necessary to develop expertise so not only will novice teachers stay in the faculty role but also seasoned educators in the profession. Smith, Hecker-Fernandes, Zorn, and Duffy

(2012) sought to describe the mentoring needs of faculty throughout their career. This descriptive study included 30 tenure track faculty and 18 clinical instructors from two campuses. One of the themes identified was that mentoring needs change with time. Although the faculty in this study related that mentoring new faculty was highly regarded, there was little administrative support for ongoing mentorship of seasoned faculty. The authors suggest retention of tenure track, and clinical faculty will improve if mentoring occurs at all career phases.

Much has been written regarding the positive effects of mentoring in education. In a study of 464 health science faculty, Feldman, Arean, Marshall, Lovett, and O'Sullivan (2010) found a positive correlation between faculty who were mentored and academic self-efficacy scores. White et al. (2010) conducted a hermeneutic study to understand the experiences of 23 novice faculty from one school of nursing who participated in a mentorship program. The participants expressed the value of having a mentor. One of the themes identified was transitioning to a new nurse educator. Protégés discussed their frustration with the role of a new nurse educator. Although they had the academic credentials required to teach in a school of nursing, they were clinical degrees not educational ones. They further related that their mentors were instrumental in helping them better understand "how to" teach. These researchers also sought to understand the experiences of the mentors (Wilson, Brannan, & White, 2010). Eleven faculty mentors agreed to be interviewed for this study. Findings revealed that although a major challenge to mentoring is the amount of time it takes away from their own work, the benefits of sharing their wisdom was worthwhile. In both of these studies, the participants discussed the importance of matching the protégé and mentor so that a meaningful relationship can be developed.

The importance of the mentoring relationship has been well documented (Conn, 2013; Eberman, Kahanov, Kahanov, & Yoder, 2011; Eller, Lev, & Feurer, 2014; Specht, 2013). Eller et al. sought to identify key components necessary for an effective mentoring relationship. In this study of 117 mentor dyads, the mentor was a faculty member conducting research, and the protégé was an undergraduate or a first year graduate student participating in the mentor's research. One of the themes identified was *independence and collaboration*. Both protégés and mentors believed that these were important characteristics for the mentoring relationship. Participants in this study specifically discussed that mentees should be allowed to make mistakes. These finding are similar to suggestions made by Eberman et al. (2011) who recommend that mentors empower their protégés by supporting their failures without rescuing them. Another common characteristic was the exchange of knowledge. The mentoring relationship should be reciprocal in that both individuals will improve their work (Eberman et al., 2011; Hadidi, Lindquist, & Bockwalter, 2013; Nies & Troutman-Jordan, 2012). Hadidi et al. (2013) propose that there is a mutual investment of time, engagement, and energy. Mentors should be nonjudgmental. Both mentors and protégés should respect and trust each other. Participants in the Eller et al. (2014) study also found it helpful when mentors shared stories of struggles and failures; not just their successes. Conn (2013) advocates for this as well. She proposes that mentees gain confidence in their mentor when they feel that it is safe to reveal their own problems. Faculty who are well mentored will be more likely to mentor other novice faculty in the future (Conn, 2013; Eberman et al., 2011).

The literature includes significant research on mentoring nursing students (Huybrecht, Loeckx, Quaeyhaegens, De Tobel, & Mistiaen, 2011; Veeramah, 2012) and nursing faculty in their role as researchers (Heinrich & Oberleitner, 2012; Hadidi et al., 2013; Nies & Troutman-Jordan, 2012; Conn, 2013), yet there is a paucity of literature on the topic of mentoring and its influence on faculty's ability