Developing an understanding of research-based nursing pedagogy among clinical instructors: A qualitative study

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ARTICLE INFO

SUMMARY

Background: Effective instruction is imperative to the learning process of clinical nursing instructors. Faculty members are required to provide high-quality teaching and training by using new ways of teaching pedagogical methods to clinical instructors, which have transformed pedagogies from an exclusive clinical model to a holistic model.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to explore clinical instructors' use of planning, implementation, feedback loops, and reflection frameworks to apply research-based teaching and to examine the pedagogy used during field experience.

Method: Data for the qualitative study were obtained from twenty purposefully sampled clinical teachers (n = 20) via lists of questioned instructional practices and discussions, semi-structured interviews, observational notes, field notes, and written reflections. Data were analyzed by using a triangulation method to ensure trustworthiness, credibility, and reliability.

Findings: Three main themes emerged regarding the use of research-based teaching strategies: the need for learning about research-based pedagogy, support mechanisms to implement innovative teaching strategies, and transitioning from nursing student to nursing clinical instructors.

Conclusion: It has been well documented that the nursing profession faces a serious shortage of nursing faculty, impacting the quality of clinical teaching. Developing clinical instructor programs to give students opportunities to select instructor pathways, focusing on knowledge promoting critical thinking and life-long professional development, is essential. Nursing colleges must collaborate by using a partnership model to achieve competency in planning, implementation, feedback loops, and reflection. Applying research-based clinical teaching requires the development of programs that integrate low-fidelity simulation and assisted instruction through the use of computers in Nursing Colleges.

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Background

Globally, nursing education has undergone a significant transformation whereby a humanities and holistic approach has replaced the traditional clinical model of teaching and training. At the college level, the goal of nursing programs is to provide students with both theoretical and practical education to ensure their competency when delivering health care services (Zakari, 2011). These college-level programs face challenges due to a worldwide shortage of nurses and especially qualified nursing instructors (Potempa et al., 2009). Therefore, there is a great need for national clinical nursing instructors who can effectively deliver dual approaches to future nursing students.

In response to this challenge, many college of nursing strategic plans focused on the improvement of the academic and developmental services of nursing education (King Saud University, 2012). From this perspective, the responsibility of the nursing faculty encompasses three issues: teaching, research, and community service (Zakari, 2011). In addition, the nursing faculty members are required to provide high-quality teaching and training of new clinical instructors and demonstrators. New graduate nurses who are employed as nursing demonstrators or clinical instructors need to transition from the role of student into the role of clinical instructors.

In colleges of nursing, faculties are exploring new ways of teaching pedagogical methods to clinical instructors in order to facilitate the training of clinical nursing instructors. The term "pedagogy" is associated with teaching. According to Chinn (1989), pedagogy is the actions the teachers take in the learning environment, the materials they use, how they use them, and the attitudes they communicate (Chinn, 1989). Therefore, pedagogy includes both ways of thinking and behaviors in

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education. Pedagogical approaches commonly blend learning and application. These approaches include participating in seminars, discussing and critiquing qualitative research reports, engaging in fieldwork activities, presenting findings to the class, and writing reports (Kawashima, 2005; Laframboise and Shea, 2009). Nursing faculty members and clinical instructors work collaboratively to illustrate and extend these pedagogies in order to reform their courses.

Effective instruction is imperative to the learning process. In general, teachers experience conflict between what they learned in their courses and the real world of their teaching jobs (Clift and Brady, 2005). This is also true in the nursing field. The nursing faculties monitor new clinical instructors and facilitate their integration of theory and practice. Furthermore, faculty members work with instructors in the college to make connections among theory, research, and practice. Although clinical instructors work under faculty supervision, they have few opportunities to acquire the means to implement the research-based methods taught in their shared courses, with faculty members teaching the clinical portion of the course.

Research Study Context

Nursing education within a university setting has transformed through the implementation of different pedagogies from the exclusive clinical setting model to the holistic model. This study describes how clinical instructors use planning, implementation, feedback loops, and reflection frameworks to apply research-based teaching, and it examines effective pedagogy used during the field experience.

Research Methods

Design

A qualitative interpretive and explanatory instrumental case study design was used. This design was used to gain a deeper understanding of the issue. This method was preferred due to the questions that were asked (Yin, 2009). Thus, the case selection was simple and involved subjects who were willing to participate.

Sampling and Participants

Demonstrators and clinical instructors in their first semester of teaching were assigned courses based on scheduling availability and were evaluated on their instructional performance strategies by a faculty mentor. According to the human resource policy and college of nursing requirements, teaching staff can be hired as demonstrators, for academic ladder, clinical instructors or nonacademic ladder. The demonstrators are nursing graduates who have bachelor's degrees with average Grade Point Averages (GPAs) of 3.75 and above out of 5.00, who are employed for the academic ladder, and who teach both theory and clinical nursing courses. Consequently, these demonstrators advance their education by earning master's and doctoral degrees in nursing with full scholarships. Conversely, clinical instructors are nursing graduates who have bachelor's degrees with average GPAs of 3.0 and above, who are employed for the clinical ladder, and who teach only clinical of nursing skills. The college policy allows for both types of instructors to practice clinical teaching under faculty supervision until they have advanced their education.

In this study, twenty subjects agreed to participate (n = 20). Participants were sampled based on purposeful sampling of those who were attending the preparation and clinical teaching training workshop. The workshop was conducted for both demonstrators and clinical instructors. The aim of this workshop was to train and prepare participants to instruct and to familiarize them with selected methods of clinical teaching and instructing at a mastery level so that they can acquire competencies in teaching clinical sessions. Furthermore, participants who could convey the issue, attempt challenging teaching strategies, and

instruct small groups of nursing students in different clinical settings were invited to participate.

Setting and Procedures

During the first week of the semester, both demonstrators and clinical instructors attended a 1-week preparation clinical teaching workshop. The workshop activities included an overview of clinical practice and bedside teaching that involved applying pedagogical approaches and using planning, implementation, feedback loops, and reflection frameworks to apply research-based teaching. The preparation includes guidelines for developing instructional plans and clinical courses and the ability to circulate feedback and suggestions with other faulty members. This preparation enabled the demonstrators and clinical instructors to identify instructional strategies. In addition, the research team inspects the study's feasibility and willingness of the participants to participate. Furthermore, the open-dialog approach encouraged them to reflect and ask what strategies could be performed in clinical teaching. They began their clinical teaching during the third week of the semester under faculty supervision and mentoring. Each participant attended 3 days per week for 15 weeks per semester, for a total of 45 days of clinical teaching.

Five faculty mentors were assigned, two demonstrators and two clinical instructors. Each faculty mentor taught at least four nursing courses and was responsible for a weekly seminar connected to their clinical courses and conducted by their trainees. In the seminar, students reflected on their experiences and discussed different instructional strategies that were used. It was required of faculty during the seminar to complete observational notes with illustrations of questions and concerns that were articulated in discussions by trainees. In addition, each trainee was required to adapt at least two instructional strategies incorporating research-based teaching and using the planning, implementation, and feedback loop framework.

A semi-structured interview question guide was developed to guide the interview process in a flexible manner. In-depth interviewing of ten demonstrators and ten clinical instructors was conducted at a private meeting room in a nursing college. The question "How and what do you do to manage your teaching strategies for clinical teaching?" was used to start the conversation. Facilitator techniques such as "Could you please describe that further?" and "Do you mean…" were used to elicit more detailed information. The guide questions allowed the research team to focus on the purpose of the study and encouraged participants to express detailed information. Interviews were conducted in the interviewees' native language and averaged 45 min in length. In the beginning, the participants did not feel comfortable enough to record the interview. Therefore, interviewing was completed in writing. The principal investigator of the research team conducted the interview rather than the course faculty, in an effort to help the participants speak openly regarding their complaints, recommendations, and accomplishments. Participants were asked to keep field notes and two sets of written reflections.

Methods to Assure Rigor

In a qualitative study, the trustworthiness of data sources and analyses must be ensured (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2007). To assure rigor in this study, steps recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were tracked. Credibility of the data collected was fulfilled by member-checking and peer debriefing (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Detailed descriptions from the interviews and reflection probes were used to secure transferability. To provide transparency, the procedures were described in detail, including interview questions and reflections. Furthermore, dependability and conformability were guaranteed by using Polit's (2008) inter-coder approach.