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Developing competencies in the novice nurse educator: An integrative review^{1,2}

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ABSTRACT

Concern is expressed about the competence of novice nurse educators. This integrative review identifies factors that facilitate or impede nurse educator's transition into an educational role. Quantitative and qualitative literature was reviewed, from 2007–2017 in the databases: Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature, Education Resources Information Center, MEDLINE, Science Direct, ProQuest. Findings indicate that orientation programs, mentor support, clarity about role expectations, and ongoing feedback on performance during the transition phase are essential for academic organizations to retain excellent nursing faculty.

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Introduction

Experienced nurses assume nurse educator's positions in academia with the intention of making a significant contribution to educating future nurses (Cranford, 2012; Goodrich, 2014; Poindexter, 2013; Shanta, Kalanek, Moulton, & Lang, 2012). Although experts in clinical practice, experienced nurses may have difficulty transitioning to academia, primarily because they lack a formalized orientation process to the environment (Boyd & Lawley, 2009). Organized preparation is a challenge facing many expert nurses who choose to move into a career in nurse education (Allan & Aldebron, 2008; Anderson, 2009), as “teaching requires a skill set of its own” (Cangelosi, Crocker & Sorrell, 2009, p. 371). In the United States, less emphasis has been placed on the preparation of nurse educators (Bellack & Tanner, 2010; National League of Nursing [NLN], 2013), with a decreased number of graduate programs specifically designed to prepare nurse educators (Halstead, 2007). Many doctoral programs were reported as having no formal preparation for the teaching aspects of the faculty role, even though many graduates assume educational

roles (Bellack & Tanner, 2010; James et al., 2014). Other countries have formal teaching preparation for clinically experienced nurses (Dempsey, 2007; McArthur-Rouse, 2007; Nursing & Midwifery Council [NMC], 2008; Salminen, Melender, & Leino-Kilpi, 2009; Salminen, Stolt, Koskinen, Katajisto, & Leino-Kilpi, 2012). In the United Kingdom (UK) for example, nurse educators are required to complete an Nursing and Midwifery Council UK approved teacher preparation program, which includes a minimum of 360 hours of assessed teaching activities (NMC, 2008).

Learning to teach and facilitate knowledge acquisition in nursing students requires preparation and additional formal education to ensure beginning competency in teaching (Salminen et al., 2012; Shanta et al., 2012). Educators should be able to competently participate in teaching, research, and scholarly activities (Jackson, Peters, Andrew, Salamonson, & Halcomb, 2011). Teaching effectiveness should be demonstrated by an adept personal teaching style, the use of different teaching strategies, and expert knowledge of the subject (Billings, 2008; Halstead, 2007), which is focused on evidence-based teaching practices (NLN, 2005, 2012; Patterson & Klein, 2012).

New nurse educators should be adequately prepared for the transition from clinical practice into academia (Boyd & Lawley, 2009; Staykova, 2012). Nurse educator preparation would include sufficient prior knowledge of the nurse educator role, an awareness of appropriate teaching methods, the application of teaching theories and strategies (Billings, 2008; Dempsey, 2007; Gardener, 2014; McArthur-Rouse, 2007; Poindexter, 2013; Salminen et al., 2009), and knowledge of curriculum development (Poindexter, 2013; Shanta et al., 2012; Staykova, 2012). Teaching proficiency should be

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demonstrated in both a clinical and classroom setting, with the ability to assess and evaluate students' academic progress (Garrow & Tawse, 2009; Poindexter, 2013).

Studies show that novice educators who participate in teaching preparation programs experience a smoother transition from clinical practice into an academic role (Baker, 2010; Hewitt & Lewallen, 2010). Nurses who transition into the educator role and receive no formal preparation or support suffer from role ambiguity and high levels of stress, leading to strain and anxiety (Anderson, 2009; Cangelosi et al., 2009). These nurse educators were more likely to leave academia within 5 years (Cranford, 2012). The purpose of this integrative review is to report on research that addresses the development of teaching competencies in novice nurse educators.

Method

An integrative review to reflect current knowledge in nursing science examining teaching preparation and competency of novice nurse educators was conducted based on Whittemore and Knafli's (2005) framework. The term *competency* is used to reflect the knowledge, skills, and personal traits required for the nurse educator role. Synonyms and term variants were also searched and combined using the Boolean OR (e.g., *novice nurseeducators* OR *nurse instructors* OR *nurse educators* combined for example with the terms *competency/competence* (see Table A). These different facets were combined with the Boolean AND. Relevant thesaurus terms unique to each database were located to increase the sensitivity of the search and reduce the chances of missing any potentially relevant studies. Plurals and spelling variants were also taken into consideration. Following initial searching, to ensure literature searches were relevant, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied (see Tables 2B and 3).

All relevant journal articles, research studies, and reviews about novice nurse educators that met the inclusion criteria were examined to determine their suitability for analysis in the review. Titles and abstracts were screened for relevance, and the full text of 202 articles were obtained and scrutinized. The review included studies published from 2007 to 2017 to ensure a current view of nurse educator preparation and support. Hand-searching of the reference lists from selected citations was carried out on the full-text articles to ensure that no relevant studies were omitted. The inclusion criteria for the study comprised all peer-reviewed research articles related to nurse teaching ability/competency and experiences. American Government and nursing boards/committee documents and research reports were searched for relevance. Education articles from Australia, Canada, China, Croatia, Finland, Iran, Ireland, New Zealand, Taiwan, the United States, and the UK were found to be relevant to this review. Information on relevant studies was obtained from the following databases: Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature, Medline, ProQuest, Science Direct, and Education Resources Information Center.

Results

The search resulted in 3,505 potentially relevant papers. Initially, 3,333 papers were excluded based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria, duplicates (repetitions), and inaccessibility of papers. The remaining full text of 202 articles were assessed for relevance against the stated inclusion criteria. Twenty-seven papers met the inclusion criteria (see Fig. 1, Appendix C) Nine were quantitative; there were two mixed methods and 16 qualitative studies. Quality assessment was conducted to critically appraise the appropriateness of the study design to the research question. Studies were checked for possible bias, the outcome measure used, and the intervention and quality of reporting (Centre for Research Dissemination [CRD], 2009; Whittemore & Knafli, 2005). Data extraction was then performed to

obtain essential information on the characteristics of the included studies (CRD, 2009).

Quality of Included Studies

Appraisal methods were used for both the qualitative and quantitative research studies (Bowling, 2009; Pearson, 2004). All the studies—including title, abstract, and references—were quality assessed to determine the rigor of the study design and analysis and to provide a quality score. All quantitative research studies were appraised using Bowling's (2009) checklist, which utilizes a 20-point criteria. All the studies included in the integrated review met at least 11 of 20 criteria on the checklist and were considered of sufficient quality and relevance to be included in the review (see Table D4). The qualitative studies were appraised using the Qualitative Assessment and Review Instrument (Pearson, 2004). The qualitative research studies included in the review scored between 8 and 10 and were either medium or high quality (see Table E5).

Further analysis of the research articles, using a modified version of Greenhalgh's (2010) check list for quality improvement, enabled the extraction of themes and data from the selected studies. The check list for quality improvement includes the following: study context, with number of participants and demographic data, aim of study, mechanism to improve quality, how was success measured, detail on change process, and main findings (see Table F6 and Table G7). Themes identified from this process are reviewed in the narrative discussion.

Narrative Discussion on the Findings From the Selected Published Research

The studies are reviewed under three themes: Exploring teaching preparation, orientation, and support during role transition; the ambiguity of nurse education; and managing students to facilitate their learning needs.

Exploring Teaching Preparation, Orientation, and Support During Role Transition

Novice nurse educators have raised concerns about how to teach effectively and motivate students to learn. The literature suggests that expertise in clinical practice is not adequate for the nurse educator role that encompasses a range of new skills that require time to develop (Anderson, 2009; Cangelosi et al., 2009; Duffy, 2013; Manning & Neville, 2009; Schriener, 2007; Shanta et al., 2012; Weidman, 2013). Novice nurse educators reported having a stressful transition when there was a lack of preparation for their new role. Some nurse educators expressed feelings of failure, incompetence, and limited effectiveness within the role. In addition, they voiced concern about meeting job obligations and dissatisfaction with the education role, leading them to question their ability to be effective nurse educators (Anderson, 2009; Boyd & Lawley, 2009; Cooley & DeGagne, 2016; Cranford, 2012; Dempsey, 2007; Manning & Neville, 2009; McArthur-Rouse, 2007; Salminen et al., 2009; Schriener, 2007). Learning the practical skills of how to teach while adapting to their new role is an ongoing challenge for new nurse educators (Anderson, 2009; Dempsey, 2007; Schoening, 2013; Weidman, 2013).

Adequate preparation is reported as essential to increase teaching effectiveness and retain nurse educators (Baker, 2010; Cranford, 2012; Dempsey, 2007; Gardener, 2014; McArthur-Rouse, 2007; Schriener, 2007; Shanta et al., 2012). Graduate coursework preparation for teaching practice should include information on different learning styles, curriculum design, teaching skills, assessment, evaluation, and classroom management. This would ensure that novice

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