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Nursing Practice Education through Participatory Action Methods: Empowering Preceptors to Direct the Future of Nursing Education

Teaching has followed rote methods of presenting course objectives formulated by faculty and students but marginally including the preceptor or other person(s) directly involved with the student in a practice education format in the planning of this course work. The purpose of this study was to generate a new model of nursing practice education reflecting the voice of the participants in the research through participatory action research (PAR) methods. Involving preceptors in nursing education has led the researcher to the *Theory of Empowering Preceptors* which accounts for the process through which preceptors formulated the practice model. While this research was centered on nursing students it has wide application to other disciplines in which a practicum is included as a requirement for learning.

Preceptors are chosen based on their willingness to participate in the educational process, just as in PAR. They fill a short-term mentor role. They are involved in active teaching-learning modalities in the practice setting with a one-on-one reality based experience for the student in their chosen profession. In addition to the practice based knowledge and experiences which they offer, they help to socialize the student to the professional role and provide evaluation of the student to the faculty. Their role in the education of students is invaluable but requires direction from the faculty while the faculty nurtures and supports them in their role as preceptor. This need for nurturing and resulting empowerment has been supported through the research which will be presented. The empowerment of the preceptor then leads to a fuller and richer experience for the student as the constraints from faculty are lifted and the preceptor is freed to develop the student through student-preceptor shared methodologies.

In this research, pedagogical assumptions of the faculty as the primary and sometimes sole source of dispensing or facilitating knowledge development are challenged. All disciplines are encouraged to actively recognize, encourage and enable members of their profession to take an active role in enhancing and developing their profession through active inclusion of students of the profession. Through PAR methods, the knowledge and strengths of these professionals have an opportunity to emerge. The participants will be asked to consider the use of PAR methodology within the context of their discipline. The process of PAR as a research methodology as the focus for other disciplines within the context of professional practice will be explored.

The goal of this session is to assist the participants in identifying and replicating the participatory action research methods from the research presented to create user defined education as applicable to their discipline.

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