

A Case Study on Experiences of Clinical Preceptors in the Undergraduate Nursing Program

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Abstract : Clinical education is one of the most important components of a nursing curriculum as it develops the students' cognitive, psychomotor and affective skills. Clinical teaching ensures the integration of knowledge into practice. As the numbers of students increase in the field of nursing coupled with the faculty shortage, clinical preceptors are the best choice to ensure student learning in the clinical settings. The clinical preceptor role has been introduced in the undergraduate nursing programme. In Pakistan, this role emerged due to a faculty shortage. Initially, two clinical preceptors were hired. This study will explore clinical preceptors views and experiences of precepting Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) students in an undergraduate program. A case study design was used. As case studies explore a single unit of study such as a person or very small number of subjects; the two clinical preceptors were fundamental to the study and served as a single case. Qualitative data were obtained through an iterative process using in depth interviews and written accounts from reflective journals that were kept by the clinical preceptors. The findings revealed that the clinical preceptors were dedicated to their roles and responsibilities. Another, key finding was that clinical preceptors' prior knowledge and clinical experience were valuable assets to perform their role effectively. The clinical preceptors found their new role innovative and challenging; it was stressful at the same time. Findings also revealed that in the clinical agencies there were unclear expectations and role ambiguity. Furthermore, clinical preceptors had difficulty integrating theory into practice in the clinical area and they had difficulty in giving feedback to the students. Although this study is localized to one university, generalizations can be drawn from the results. The key findings indicate that the role of a clinical preceptor is demanding and stressful. Clinical preceptors need preparation prior to precepting students on clinicals. Also, institutional support is fundamental for their acceptance. This paper focuses on the views and experiences of clinical preceptors undertaking a newly established role and resonates with the literature. The following recommendations are drawn to strengthen the role of the clinical preceptors: A structured program for clinical preceptors is needed along with mentorship. Clinical preceptors should be provided with formal training in teaching and learning with emphasis on clinical teaching and giving feedback to students. Additionally, for improving integration of theory into practice, clinical modules should be provided ahead of the clinical. In spite of all the challenges, ten more clinical preceptors have been hired as the faculty shortage continues to persist.

Keywords : baccalaureate nursing education, clinical education, clinical preceptors, nursing curriculum

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