

REVIEWS

Learning to teach: When should the socialization begin?

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ABSTRACT

Socialization is a process where one learns about the roles and patterns of a group. Socialization to the role of a nurse educator is a complicated and diverse issue. Higher education is undergoing major changes, which include increased external scrutiny related to teaching and learning. Historically the process of learning to teach adapts or changes related to economics, demands for educators or other societal reasons. Currently the requirement to teach is met by anyone holding a graduate or terminal degree regardless of his or her respective curriculum. This paper supports the notion graduate education in nursing would be most effective if subject matter related to the student's nursing specialty as well as content on pedagogy and educational philosophies were integrated.

Key Words: Higher education, Socialization, Teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a definitive case for why good teaching matters. The success of students in meeting learning objectives and becoming productive in the higher education job market support this claim.^[1,2] Nursing graduates, in particular, must pass a national licensure or specialty certification examination to demonstrate entry-level competency before they can work in their area of preparation. Higher education is, and has always been, an evolving institution. Today, there are more students applying for college, the job market is fiercely competitive and monetary support from the government and the public are at an all-time low. Administrators, students, parents, and community members are holding higher education teachers accountable for learning outcomes.^[3] However, there is a need to advance college teaching despite these challenges.^[4] There is inconsistency regarding preparation of higher education teachers and therefore their ability to teach. For the past

thirty years new nursing faculty have tended to have been prepared as advanced practice nurses with limited attention to preparation for an educational role. Currently, after obtaining a graduate degree one is eligible to teach in higher education regardless of whether the candidate has any formal training in the art of teaching.^[2,5] The faculty shortage in nursing means academic administrators are often satisfied to find people with graduate degrees who are willing to teach regardless of their preparation for the role.

Along with a growing atmosphere towards accountability in higher education the U.S. Department of Education also places a major emphasis on student learning outcomes. The colleges and universities strive to maintain compliance because a portion of tuition revenue comes from the federal government to support need-based aid and low-interest student loans. This program is subject to accreditation which comes from an external source that review quality procedures

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and evaluates outcomes. Without successful accreditation, the university and colleges may not remain eligible to receive these funds.^[6]

About 40% of doctoral degree graduates in nursing pursue a career in academia.^[7] Among all doctoral graduates who pursue an academic career only half will teach at research universities. Thus only one quarter of graduates who pursue academia will be teaching at a college or university where teaching and service are equally as important as research. Unfortunately education research indicates current doctoral programs are not preparing graduates to excel in these jobs.^[8]

Doctoral programs can better prepare students by socializing them to the culture of academia while in graduate school. Socialization can be defined as a process where one is learning about the values, attitudes, and philosophy of a particular group.^[9] Great teaching is not an innate quality but a skill requiring cultivation over time via practice and education. The question about when someone should learn how to teach has been debated for decades. Most universities are expanding their research definition based on Boyer's 1990 publication titled *Scholarship Reconsidered* to include the scholarship of teaching; this signifies the commitment higher education places on teaching. This book, published by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, offers a new paradigm identifying a more complete view of scholarly activity by college and university professors. It also questions the presence of the current system, which overemphasizes the importance of research and publication and underemphasizes the importance of teaching.^[11] Boyer's text encourages institutions of higher education to place more value on teaching. Unfortunately doctoral programs are not educating or socializing potential educators to roles in academia. The purpose of this paper is to examine socialization as it pertains to nursing education and suggest possible strategies to assist new faculty in developing their teaching skills.

2. SIGNIFICANCE

Until recently higher education has been immune to scrutiny. Now higher education systems are under review by parents, potential students, legislators, current employers, and community members. All of these parties are interested in the quality of teaching and learning within an educational institution.^[9] As stated above, the American higher education system is in need of restructuring, and the professors are at the center of the issue. A main concern is the overemphasis universities place on research because it places less value on excellence in teaching. In academia today, professors have multiple demands and are held accountable more than ever before, especially considering the financial restraints placed on institutions of higher education. The higher educa-

tion market is also becoming increasingly consumer driven and therefore consumers want to quantify the professor's productivity, which includes meeting learning objectives in the classrooms.^[3] The issue lies in not only being able to recruit qualified faculty, but to also retain productive faculty. Currently a school with an adequate amount of experienced, tenured faculty leads to successful transitioning of new graduates or new faculty to an environment conducive to meet the demands of teaching, scholarship and service.

Currently the qualification to teach is achieved through obtaining a graduate degree however many graduate degrees do not include formal education on pedagogy or andragogy to prepare students for teaching in higher education.^[10] There are few professors who graduate with the knowledge and skills related to teaching in higher education; these professors can be considered experts in both their discipline and teaching. The remainder of professors teaching in higher education institutions are likely teaching as they were taught. This is unfortunate because students in the twenty-first century are overwhelmed with technology and multitasking. Current teaching pedagogy needs to be updated along with the generational changes seen in the classroom.

There also has been concern about the looming faculty shortage and the impact it will have on nursing programs and specifically PhD programs. The number of DNP graduates is rising and the PhD programs are under examination in regards to their quality and ability to provide mentorship and a solid research base needed for new researchers to begin their careers. Currently about 30% of DNP graduates assume positions in higher education without any preparation for the faculty role, while less than 40% of PhD graduates assume these roles.^[7] More research needs to be done on the specific preparation of doctoral students and whether it prepares them for a role in academia. The American Association of the Colleges of Nursing (AACN) states that the DNP's should assume a leadership role on evidence-based practice. A main goal is to translate research in practice in order to implement a viable change to practice.^[11] Asking specific questions about educational preparation will be useful in determining a right fit for each institution.

This dilemma is not fault of the professors; they are content experts and have studied and conducted research within the discipline. However, that does not ensure an ability to teach. In addition, as students, most were not socialized properly to the role of the educator. Learning how to teach is a major portion of the socialization to the role as an educator in higher education. Ironically, after graduation, the majority of college professors devote more time to teaching than to research and yet the graduate degree being acquired better prepares

students for a career in research rather than teaching.^[12]

Assessment of the job market and what colleges and universities seek in future applicants indicate “teaching readiness” is critical. Adams (2002) discusses the importance of graduates being prepared for academic life including differentiating the various research-focused doctoral degrees.^[13] Graduates also need to know professors spend a majority of their time teaching and working with students. Van Maanen (1976) suggests socialization into a specific role or institution should begin with a learning period before becoming a member to allow time for examining the values and beliefs of the group.^[14] The graduate and doctoral experiences are vital to a student’s decision-making process when choosing a future role.

3. HISTORY

Discussion about teaching the teacher began in the early 1970s. Even though there was ample published literature about teaching and learning Milton (1972) argued faculty do not have the time nor the expertise to read this literature and understand the concepts. He further stated “elementary principles of learning, especially in higher education, have been neglected, abandoned to an abiding faith in traditional methods, or periodically subjugated to innovative hunches” (p. ix). He believed teachers teach as they were taught.^[15]

Cahn’s (1978) book, *Scholars Who Teach*, compared primary and secondary education teachers to college and university professors. He stated an applicant with a PhD is considered teaching ready and the degree itself is considered sufficient. He said there is no further examination of the applicant’s education in regards to pedagogic competence or teaching skills. And yet K-12 teachers are fully instructed on pedagogy, educational philosophies, and effective teaching strategies.^[16] Commonly the process of teaching and learning is considered on the job learning in higher education.

In the 1980s educators began to look at other options of formal education, which led to the emergence of the Teaching Assistant (TA). Boehrer and Sarkisian (1985) state while someone may feel confident tutoring an individual, teaching a class is different. The ability to change teaching practices based on classroom evaluation requires knowledge and expertise in pedagogy. Also the way the professor learned the content is not always the way to teach it. Even though TAs were added to graduate schools, it was not necessary for all students to experience being a TA in order to graduate. Those students participating in the TA program felt the knowledge and skills gained from these experiences was valuable even if a position in higher education was not offered, highlighting the fact the ability to communicate information effectively to groups of people is valuable in any position.^[17]

In nursing in the 1980s, the emphasis of graduate education shifted away from the preparation of educators and administrators, which was the origin of graduate education in nursing, to the preparation of advanced practice nurses. The deans who comprise membership of AACN realized in the early 2000s there were few people left in nursing education prepared in this role. The issues related to quality program design, excellence in teaching, and student evaluations emerged as a concern.^[18]

The continued push for quality in teaching persisted throughout the 1990s with an increased focus on higher education professors receiving formal training on pedagogy and educational philosophy. Cross (1990) supports professors “need to know how to teach in an expert way, with the ability to diagnose, analyze, evaluate, prescribe, and most important, improve the quality of teaching and learning in college classrooms (p. 11)”. Without formal, structured education centered on learning these principles, professors are left to trial and error, hoping their teaching strategies are effective.^[19] The 1990s also saw an emphasis on faculty development training, which was offered by individual colleges or universities giving new and seasoned professors the option of remaining up to date or learning about new instructional methods on a regular basis. Unfortunately, most of the higher education institutions focused more on research as a major measure of productivity rather than teaching excellence, so many of these programs were not sustainable. Budget constraints in higher education occurred and, because of the focus on research over training, these types of mentoring programs were among the first cuts.^[20]

The Association of American Universities (AAU) formed the Committee on Graduate Education during the 1990s to evaluate current graduate curriculum in the United States. This committee felt the majority of PhD programs were too heavily focused on research at the expense of learning to teach. In addition, the committee believed graduates were becoming too specialized in their discipline, which did not allow for interprofessional collaboration. It suggested graduate programs add material to provide the knowledge and skills to teach.^[20]

In 1993, a program titled *Preparing Future Faculty* (PFF) was formed through a partnership between the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Using Boyer’s (1990) definition of scholarship PFF intended to socialize graduate students into a career in academia during their studies.^[21] Socialization into the role would include a broad definition of scholarship, which included discovery, application, integration, and teaching.^[1,8] *Preparing Future Faculty*, a deliberate

structure of professional development activities, provided graduate students an idea of what responsibilities would most likely be in future academic roles. PFF programs commonly partnered with non-PhD-granting academic institutions, including community colleges and smaller schools not heavily focused on research, which gave students a broader view of academia and the ability to make a better decision about an area to pursue after graduation.^[8]

The issue of whether a professor should have formal education associated with the practice of teaching has been debated for decades. Barnes (1984) focused his doctoral dissertation on whether current professors who, teaching full time at four-year institutions, thought graduate education should contain formal curriculum to prepare graduates to teach. Rosensitto (1999) repeated the same study but included both part time and full time faculty at both two-year and four-year schools. The findings of both studies support the notion graduate programs should include formal curricula to prepare graduates to teach. The percentage of professors who agreed with incorporating formal education on teaching into graduate curricula increased by more than 10% from 1984 (70% of professors agreed) to 1999 (81.6% of professors agreed).^[10,22]

Graduate programs are designed to produce individuals who will succeed in research and scholarship. Previous research has shown when graduates accept jobs in higher education typical placement are tenure track focused on scholarly research, which diminishes the importance of teaching excellence.^[10] Educating all students during graduate and doctoral degrees would benefit all graduates when starting their careers in academia; even if a graduate chooses not to teach in higher education the ability to be transfer knowledge effectively to a group of people in any setting is invaluable.^[17]

Over the past 30 years, there has been rising interest from external stakeholders in the academic performance of institutions. Accountability for student outcomes, increased competition, and decreased fiscal resources have contributed to the external scrutiny of colleges and universities.^[6]

4. CURRENT STATE

In general the issues of teaching excellence remain. The focus on teaching versus research is shifting. Higher education institutions are beginning to realize a focus on research productivity can decrease teaching excellence. The stakeholders in higher education institutions are the students. Providing them with teachers who are well versed in pedagogy is essential to learning. Inconsistencies among how higher education teachers are prepared to teach are vast: Some graduate degrees focus solely on education and the art of teaching while other degrees do not provide students with a single course

related to socialization into an educator role or educational pedagogy. Balancing research within a discipline and socializing students in the role of educator by providing them with formal education and experiences would give students credibility in discipline and in teaching.

The ability of nursing faculty to maintain teaching excellence is further complicated by the fact that nursing is a practice discipline and, along with scholarship and teaching, clinical practice is still expected at many institutions. Many faculty express concern over role overload and tenure. Scholarship is very quantitative, and based on the number of publications, presentations, and grants produced. Compounding the issue is the required number of hours nursing faculty must work to maintain advanced practice degree credentials. Unfortunately the last piece to a faculty role triad is teaching. Without specific programs and learning opportunities available for new and seasoned faculty the ability to advance teaching skills becomes the sole responsibility of faculty members, which may take a back seat to other job responsibilities.

Research is also limited with respect to advancing the science of nursing education. Colleges and universities strive to obtain grants offering high amounts of funding; research related to education is underfunded. Duffy, Frenn, and Patterson (2011) published an article related to nursing education research studies submitted but not funded due to budget restraints. They stated education research money is well below the average given to nurse researchers. This is a sustainability issue and, without adequate funds, needed research is not studied and nursing education science cannot advance.^[23]

The opportunities for gaining experience as an educator or socialization into academia are also diminishing. Graduate school TA programs and graduate assistant jobs have decreased heavily due to budget cuts. The remaining teaching assistant jobs remain because graduate students are hired to teach many sections of the same class. For example, one TA may teach three sections of freshman English. While this system benefits the university, graduate students are not always receiving a high quality learning experience.^[9] These TA's may be receiving mixed messages about the importance of teaching versus research. In addition, curriculum development, academic advising, and other essential educator job functions are not emphasized or even included in many programs. The opportunities for independent studies, theses, and internships, which offer students the opportunity to learn how to teach, have also decreased.^[13]

Another concern surrounding graduate socialization is the type of students who are pursuing advanced degrees. Currently less than half of the students attending doctoral programs actually live on site. More work is delivered via

distance learning, and more schools allow part time study, which has helped institutions attract students who may not have otherwise pursued a doctorate. However, it has significantly reduced the amount of time each student spends with the faculty members, leaving students and graduate programs lacking first-hand exposure to educators, even in the classroom setting.^[24] Socialization is a dynamic process accomplished only through interaction, experience, conversations about values, and other opportunities.^[9]

If students cannot gain these experiences during graduate school, the opportunity and education related to pedagogy, curriculum, and other aspects of the role of the educator shifts to the initial employment position. Unfortunately, post-graduation faculty preparation programs are inconsistent and dependent on the institution. Some institutions have centers for teaching and learning providing extensive faculty development programs; however, these programs are expensive to maintain and unfortunately can be of the first programs cut for budget constraints and available qualified faculty.

5. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

After reviewing issues related to socialization to the role of faculty in higher education, it is important to note there are some possible solutions. Currently the role of an educator in higher education encompasses the tripartite role of teaching, scholarship, and service. Depending on the type of institution expectations can vary notably by institution but also by the type of contract. Faculty need to be clear about expectations. Prior to employment potential faculty should spend time with current faculty to better understand work obligations.

After employment, orientation and mentorship for success in regards to teaching within each institution is key.^[25] There are many opportunities for successful mentorship, if they are not located within the institution, external support can be requested. Organizations such as the National League for Nursing (NLN) and Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) usually host programs and offer scholarships targeting new faculty. As far as scholarship is concerned there can be some creative ways of finding the time and effort to move scholarship forward.

Smeltzer *et al.* (2014) noted the workload placed on doctoral faculty to continue their scholarship, teach, and provide increased mentoring to graduate students. Faculty should attempt to recruit students with similar interests to advance their research, while providing mentoring.^[7] Co-authorship is another opportunity that can happen between professors and students, or mentors and mentees, publishing a manuscript with similar interests or combining research areas to provide unique perspectives to a topic. The NLN

and other organizations offer writing workshops, grant workshops and additional courses.

Service, which is the last part of the tripartite role, can vary widely depending on the institution. Applying for employment at a college or university where the mission and vision of the colleges aligns with a personal one can be beneficial. The type of service one pursues should be congruent with the area of research, or contribute to promoting teaching excellence.

Succession planning is another aspect of preparation for the future that nursing needs to focus more on. As noted before, senior faculty need to be given time to devote to mentoring new faculty in the development of programs of research.^[7] Mentoring can be described as sharing knowledge, guidance, and opportunities and it considered essential to the development of a nurse researcher. Kostovich, Saban and Collins (2010) discussed the transition from doctoral student to a new nurse researcher and the complications of this process. Most new researchers will have their own program of research fail within the first few years because of inadequate mentoring.^[26] A way to promote mentoring includes giving release time to faculty members, who provide these services. Along with the faculty database for fulfilling teaching needs, a database could be created based on research interests and could serve to connect a potential mentor and mentee together who have similar programs of research. This would serve to promote mentoring and would simultaneously advance the science.

In the short term, more dialogue needs to happen between administrators, deans and the faculty members. Conversations about what is working and what isn't working need to happen. Faculty members need to maintain a positive work-life balance and the scarce number of faculty members who are qualified to teach future nurse educators and mentor need to be allotted time to do so. Failure to promote succession planning will only damage the future of the profession of nursing.

6. CONCLUSION

Teaching is a complex phenomenon that requires knowledge of the content and effective methods to teach it. While most teachers currently are well versed in their specific discipline, they lack the ability to translate this knowledge to students. Creating a classroom environment that is conducive to learning is a challenging process and needs frequent evaluation to determine its effectiveness. Unfortunately, many faculty members believe that good teaching comes "naturally" and do not have the personal motivation to increase their knowledge of pedagogy.^[27]

Nursing as a discipline, unfortunately, has not been in the forefront of teaching excellence. Even national movements such as PPF that were formed to try to socialize graduate students into academia did not include the discipline of nursing, but rather biological and life sciences, chemistry, communication, computer science, english, history, mathematics, physics, political science, psychology, and sociology.^[21]

Literature supports that graduate and doctoral education is the first phase of the academic career and needs to be structured as such.^[9] Even when students do not take positions in higher education, they are usually expected to perform some type of teaching in their new role. Providing students with the knowledge and skills to become effective teachers

is valuable in any career they pursue.

The higher education system is undergoing many changes and a greater emphasis has been placed on teaching. Colleges and universities can strengthen undergraduate education by focusing on student learning. Faculty members need to be versed in innovative teaching strategies and be able to relate content to real life experiences to keep students engaged.^[9] The transformation of higher education will continue to evolve the role of the faculty member, but the regard for teaching excellence will always be paramount.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest statement.

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