Chapter 6

The Nurse Educator's Role in Designing Instruction and Instructional Strategies for Academic and Clinical Settings

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ABSTRACT

Nursing education programs seeking to equip graduates with needed tools to integrate medical expertise with experience in the systematic design of instruction have the opportunity to better ensure positive learning outcomes in varied settings as graduates take on their new roles as nurse educators. The learning environment of the nurse educator is complex yet with skill in the reasoned approach to the design of instruction can progress into more knowable contexts for which to problem solve. Nurse educators possessing interdisciplinary skills in their field facilitated by expertise in instructional design will enhance their practice by developing and delivering precision instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Nurse educators are guided in their practice by the Core Competencies of Nurse Educators proposed by the National League for Nursing (NLN) (National League for Nursing, 2005). Within the core competencies, nurse educators are called to "Participate in Curriculum Design and Evaluation of Program Outcomes" (National League for Nursing, 2005). However, even the most exhaustive examination of university based Master's degree programs in Nursing Education will return little reference to coursework for learners in content or theory in the systematic design, development and evaluation of instruction. While many nurse educator programs include course work in curriculum development, it is important to note that curriculum development is not synonymous with instructional design.

The design of instruction is a systematic approach to the development of instruction and instructional materials focused on solving educational problems where a reasoned assessment of the need for

the instruction is determined up front and the evaluation of the instruction is precisely aligned with the assessment of learning outcomes identified prior to the delivery of instruction. In addition, instructional design is deeply embedded within learning theory and as such, assessing the characteristics of the target learner audience becomes a key facet of the instructional design process such that instruction is relevant and immediately applicable (Dick, Carey & Carey, 2015). Curriculum development is content-based development outside of the learning environment and while high quality curriculum development will often be readily aligned with standards and inclusive of evaluation methods, curriculum development is not a systematic process in addressing the full scope of an educational problem at hand. To support nurse educators in their design efforts, this chapter aligns a brief yet concise guide for an integration of principles from the field of instructional design to scaffold the core competencies for nurse educators in the realm of curriculum development.

BACKGROUND

In considering that a consistently reported mission of Master's degree programs in Nursing Education is to prepare its graduates for the role of nurse educator in a highly dynamic academic setting as well as in complex clinical settings, it may be efficacious to move a step beyond the linear curriculum development model that many programs maintain as a core element in informing the nurse educator's practice. Further, and specific to the mission in nurse educator programs, precision in the design of instruction may serve to support confidence in addressing emergent technologies that require a skilled approach in practice, support effective communication in assessment, and help to develop highly efficient problem solving skills in a demanding interdependent work environment. Each of these areas offer support in leadership as nurses gain needed confidence in areas where they may be called upon to lead however potentially feel unprepared to do so (Ashton, 2012).

A deeper understanding of the instructional process and the environment for which the learning takes place mirrors the reasoned decision process nurses must engage in consistently and efficiently each day of their practice. Without focused skill building in a reasoned approach to the design and delivery of instruction, nursing education programs may fall short of their goal of equipping future nurse educators with the needed tools to integrate their medical expertise with experience in high quality design of instruction that might better ensure positive learning outcomes for their own learners in the varied settings in which they will teach.

In an assessment of the state of the practice by nurse educators in the instructional design process, Krouse (2015) noted that adherence to design principles is often lacking and in order to better prepare future nurse educators, programs in nursing education should not only be collaborating with instructional designers but should consider the challenge of designing instruction themselves. As more and more nurse educator programs are being offered online, nurses are looking to resources for both the design of instruction and successful practices for delivering instruction online once completed. Nurse educators are therefore faced with a twofold demand of their time and resources in first expanding the depth and breadth of their approach to the development of instruction for their courses and programs but also taking that new approach into the online learning environment. Oftentimes nurse educators have not been offered concentrated training in either realm even though consistently pressed upon to write this type of innovative and relevant curriculum for their programs (Egerton, McConnell, Corazzini, Kitzmiller, & Crook, 2010). These researchers further note that indeed demands for this quality instruction then to be

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