

Development of Expertise in the Nursing Faculty Role

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Purpose: The purpose of this study was to investigate the process of developing expertise in the nursing faculty role. This study extends the novice to expert models of Benner (1984) and Berliner (1987) to skill acquisition in the context of teaching and scholarship in an academic setting.

Method: A grounded theory approach was used to explore differences between novices and experts in knowledge and experiences and to investigate the influence of these elements on teaching and scholarship practices in the nursing faculty role. In-depth recorded interviews and at least one teaching observation were conducted with each participant. Transcripts of interviews and descriptions of observations were coded and reviewed using the constant comparative method. Outcomes of scholarly activities were also reviewed.

Findings: Categories emerged that demonstrated differences in approach among participants with various levels of expertise in specific areas. Varying by levels of expertise, specific differences in teaching were found in (1) decisions about student assignments, (2) relationships and use of agency staff, (3) approach and scope of student supervision, (4) method of feedback, and (5) philosophy toward and comfort level with evaluation.

Differences in expertise in scholarly productivity were found primarily in (1) program of scholarship, (2) commitment to development of research skills, (3) scholarship as high priority and (4) leadership in the collaborative practice of scholarly activity.

Discussion: Studies have found that novice to expert skill acquisition develops in specific and identifiable stages. Findings from this study support this theory and provide insight into specific differences in performance of nursing faculty with various levels of expertise in teaching and scholarly activity. Understanding the knowledge and experiences contributing to development of expertise will be invaluable in providing appropriate mentoring and development opportunities for faculty and students in graduate education curricula.