Analysis of Teaching Role

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Defining the word teacher and describing the role of that person is not something you can do in very few words. There are many qualities and attributes that a teacher possesses as well as a desire of improvement goals over a continuum of their career. I will discuss within this article those qualities, attributes and desires that a teacher at this level of expertise should possess.

The National League for Nursing’s mission is guided by four dynamic and integrated core values that include: caring, integrity, diversity and excellence. (National League for Nursing, 2007). All nurse educators must possess these values while also upholding other responsibilities and requirements.

A caring educator will characterize concern and consideration for the nursing profession as a whole with commitment to the common good of themselves and others. The educator will also display integrity through open-communication, ethical decision-making, and humility. The educator will be expected to embrace a culture of diversity with acceptance and respect and strive for excellence. Excellence will include a commitment to growth, improvement and understanding in a culture where change is embraced and mediocrity is not tolerated (NLN, 2007)

Nurse educators must understand the principles underlying their practice (National League of Nursing, 2006). This understanding comes from their own education and experience in the field of nursing. Teachers should be required to complete degrees in their content area as well as have record of some hands on experience within their scope of practice. Educational backgrounds, resumes and portfolios reflecting their career history are vital to the educator.

The educator must pursue continuous quality improvement in their role and recognize that this role is “multidimensional and that and ongoing commitment to develop and maintain competence in the role is essential” (NLN, 2005, p.21). Over the continuum of their careers, faculty should be expected to and rewarded for rigorously examining their teaching skills and that of others while exhibiting a spirit of inquiry about teaching and learning and demonstrating “qualities of a scholar: integrity, courage, perseverance, vitality and creativity” (NLN, 2005, p.23) At most collegiate levels, educators are required to have a research focus area and continuously strive at quality improvement within their facility and area of practice. Outlining nurse educator competencies is a foundational step in achieving excellence in nursing education (Halstead, 2007). Research supported competencies will hopefully motivate more nurses to pursue careers within nurse educator to give back to their practice. Without attention to the critical shortage of nurse educators, the generation of knowledge in nursing will be compromised (Meleis, 2005).

Educators of today, who are taught and expected to research and define new evidence based practice, will shape the scope of practice of educators to come while building the science of nursing education and achieve excellence in this field.

Within their educational facilities, teachers should be expected to be leaders and advocates for change and able to function within those environments. Research documents the need for all educators to be prepared and willing to take on the responsibility of “creating a preferred future for nursing education and nursing practice” and to be knowledgeable about the educational environments within which they practice and recognize how political, institutional, social and economic forces impact their role.” (NLN, 2005, p.23) (Halstead, 2007).

However, “knowledge of one’s field is necessary but not sufficient”. (Adams, 2002, p.v) I could not agree more with the previous statement. Educators must be flexible and willing to embrace new practices that are supported by evidence based practice models and studies while finding creative ways to present new material through technology. The medical field is constantly changing along with today’s educational technology. Nurse educators should embrace new technology such as simulation labs and other technological based learning to help integrate interactive nursing skills within the school of nursing.

An educator must be motivational and clearly informative in different environments such as the “classroom, laboratory and clinical settings that facilitate student learning and the achievement of desired cognitive, affective and psychomotor outcomes” (NLN, 2005, p.15) The educator must present information in ways that intrigue students to not only retain the information but to apply the information in a clinical setting while “helping students develop as nurses and integrate the values and behaviors expected of those who fulfill that role” (NLN, 2005, p.17) (Halstead, 2007).

Educators are responsible for introducing competent nurses to the workforce. Nurse educators achieve this through much detailed assessment along with evaluation with many creative techniques from written exams to hand-on demonstrations. One of the most challenging aspects nursing faculty might face is the use of assessment and evaluation strategies to “assess and evaluate student learning in classroom, laboratory and clinical setting, as well in all domains of learning” (NLN, 2005, p.18) (Halstead, 2007)

Educational programs are constantly comparing their own curriculum with that of others and striving to design the best possible curriculum and evaluation measure to produce the most competent graduates that will provide evidence based quality care. It is the faculty’s responsibility to design curricula and evaluate program outcomes to that “reflect contemporary health care trends and prepare graduates to function effectively in today’s complex, unpredictable, constantly changing health care environments” (NLN, 2005, p.19)

In conclusion, a nurse educator is not just what Webster might define as a person who provides education for pupils. An educator, in my opinion, is a person who devotes much time and research into building better educational programs by investing time and knowledge into the lives of others in a given field of study.

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