

Research Article

A Concept Analysis of Mentoring



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Abstract

The concept of mentoring is important in nursing. Mentoring allows opportunities for a mentor to transfer knowledge and expertise in both theory and practice and a mentee to improve performance. This concept analysis aims to clarify the meaning of 'mentoring'. Attributes, antecedents, consequences, and a model case are presented to clarify this concept further. Review of literatures was conducted by using databases which include EBSCO, MEDLINE, and Google scholar. Findings showed that mentoring allows personal and professional growth of mentees. Closing the gap between theory and practice is achieved through an expert supervision of a mentor to a mentee. Mentoring plays a central role in the development of novice nurses as they integrate theoretical concepts into their practice. The benefits of mentoring are illuminated in the increasing competency of nurses in performing their roles to be globally competitive.



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Key words: *Concept analysis, mentor, mentee, mentoring*

The gap between theory and practice raises concerns as it circles around nursing discipline. The existence of such dilemma reflects the lack of a mutual relationship between nurse practitioners and nurse scholars who dwell in theory development.

Such as in the case of a graduating student nurse and a novice registered nurse, the lack of experience in the clinical setting retracts them from executing their theoretical knowledge. Likewise, a senior and experienced nurse may administer care based on routinely practiced interventions that echoes non-observance of evidence-based practices. These exemplars posit the need for mentors who will act as catalysts to help bridge the gap between theory and practice. The ambiguity in the definition and roles of mentors, however, creates a confusion that warrants attention. The author, therefore, propose an exploration on the roles of mentors and its impact on the theoretical and clinical development of students and professional nurses. In this dissertation topic, the author aims to clarify the roles of mentors and showcase the outcomes they create. In this

regard, a concept analysis of mentoring is deemed necessary to enhance understanding and guide theory development.

The concept of mentoring is vital to nursing. The notion of mentoring originated from Homer's Odyssey in ancient Greek mythology. In 1200 B.C., Odysseus was leaving for the siege of Troy and he appointed his friend, Mentor, to be a surrogate father to his son, Telemachus (Dorsey & Baker, 2004). Dorsey and Baker (2004) defined a mentor as a wise and trusted advisor, counselor, or teacher who has something to offer that meets the immediate needs and/or future needs of another. Mentoring is a strategy to assist beginning level practitioners to prepare for the complex health care context (Theobald & Mitchell, 2002). Similarly, McCloughen, O'Brien, and Jackson (2010) identified that mentoring is important to growing new or aspiring future nurse leaders.

The success of mentoring in developing less experienced nurses is widely recognized in the clinical

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practice (Saarikoski, 2003; McCloughen, O'Brien, & Jackson, 2010; Dorsey & Baker, 2004). A continuing debate concerning the elusive definition of the roles and functions of a mentor in nursing, however, produces conflict in practice (Murray & Staniland, 2010). This dilemma, therefore, reflects the need to scrutinize and clarify the concept of mentoring to heighten nurses' understanding. This paper aims to analyze the concept of mentoring to elucidate its attributes, antecedents, consequences, and implications.

The concept analysis was initiated by identifying the concept of interest, which is mentoring, followed by a comprehensive review of literature. Internet based review of literature was conducted by searching databases which include EBSCO, MEDLINE, and Google Scholar. Retrieved literatures were examined and analyzed to identify the characteristics, similarities and variances of mentoring.

Attributes of Mentoring

In the review of literature, the author has found varied characteristics encompassing the concept of mentoring. Mentoring has been perceived according to the context to which it has been implemented. These contexts were evident in the student-teacher, student-nurse practitioner, and a novice professional nurse-expert nurse mentoring relationships. Consequently, mentoring exists at personal and professional levels.

At the personal level, mentoring is illuminated by a mentor's ability to reach out to a less experienced individual. Mentoring in the nursing profession is seen among mentors who are understanding, approachable and non-judgmental (Kopp & Hinkle, 2006). A nurse mentor is considered to be effective if the characteristics of a nurse are appreciated. These characteristics include the mentor's patience and caring attitude towards the mentee (Hockenberry-Eaton & Kline, 1995). Likewise, mentoring is deeply appreciated among mentors who are good communicators, trustworthy, enthusiastic, friendly, inspiring, committed, and have high confidence on the capabilities of their mentees (McCloughen, O'Brien, & Jackson, 2010; Andrews & Chitton, 2000).

At the professional level, mentoring is defined as the ability of the professional nurse to engage in expert practices and integrate theory and practice (vanEps, Cooke, Creedy, & Walker, 2006). Mentors are considered as experienced and knowledgeable supervisors who

facilitate learning and develops expertise in a nurturing environment (Saarikoski, 2003, vanEps, Cooke, Creedy, & Walker, 2006; Hockenberry-Eaton & Kline, 1995). In the same way, mentoring is reflected by mentors who act as role models and leaders who are accessible, supportive, loyal, and supporters of change (Andrews & Chitton, 2000; Kopp & Hinkle, 2006; Theobald & Mitchell, 2002; Hockenberry-Eaton & Kline, 1995). Being attentive to cultural and gender differences also reveals high regards of mentoring in promoting sensitivity and justice (Kopp & Hinkle, 2006).

In terms of the working relationship, mentoring requires a collaborative effort between the mentor and a mentee. The involvement of a mentee in the activities shows the mentor's high confidence and trust in the mentee's abilities. Eventually, mentoring entails gradual withdrawal of supervision until a mentee exercises competence (Andrew & Chitton, 2000).

Antecedents of Mentoring

The relationship of a mentor and a mentee elucidates a two-way working partnership towards a positive outcome. This notion clearly suggests that mentor and mentee factors influence the process of mentoring.

Darling (1984) highlights that an effective mentor has three absolute requirements which are attraction (mutual), action (time and energy), and affect (mutual respect) (cited in Andrews & Chitton, 2000). In addition, Darling (1984) also highlights three basic mentoring roles: inspirer (attraction), investor (action), and supporter (affect) (cited in Andrews & Chitton, 2000).

The method of supervision has an influence on mentoring. Saarikoski (2003) found that the total satisfaction of students correlated most clearly with the method of supervision and that those satisfied students had a successful mentor relationship and frequently enough access to private supervision sessions with mentor. In this regard, mentoring requires the theoretical competency and expertise in practice of mentors. What appears to be vital in mentoring is the balance in meeting theory and practice (Andrews & Chitton, 2000).

A mentor's intrinsic traits and reputation have a big impact in mentoring (Kopp & Hinkle, 2006). Aside from the knowledge and expertise, the commitment of mentors has a significant influence in mentoring (Theobald & Mitchell,

2002). The commitment of mentors in assisting emerging nurse leaders by cultivating their flexibility, adaptability, judgment, and creativity also mirrors their willingness to honor and support colleagues (McCloughen, O'Brien, & Jackson, 2010; Kopp & Hinkle, 2006).

On the other hand, a degree of self-motivation by the mentee is integral to the success of the mentoring partnership (Theobald & Mitchell, 2002). Nelson, Godfrey, and Purdy (2004) suggests that a mentee needs to display a strong desire to learn, a commitment to the mentoring program, and have the ability to take initiative to become successful. This notion highlights the participation of a mentee to a mentor's objectives in meeting the desired outcomes of mentoring. Further, the effective communication and personal commitment on the part of the mentee and mentor is critical to the fundamental success of the partnership (Theobald & Mitchell, 2002).

Consequences of Mentoring

Individuals who are involved in mentoring benefit from the supportive and nurturing environment it creates. The mentees achieve a sense of control over their capabilities and achieve development of intuition and skills in handling patients. Saarikoski (2003) points that a mentoring relationship is the most important element of clinical experience of nursing students.

The learning opportunities are more likely to be planned and meaningful which helps mentees to be successful (Gray & Smith, 2000). Similarly, mentoring enable institutions to recruit and retain the brightest graduate students (Nelson, Godfrey, & Purdy, 2004). This outcome reflects that the career progression of mentees is a part in strengthening institutional stability.

In the perspective of professional nurses, mentoring results to an enhanced job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and demonstration of leadership behaviors (Kopp & Hinkle, 2006). Likewise, mentoring empowers nurses to be productive and progress in their careers (Dorsey & Baker, 2004; Theobald & Mitchell, 2002). The contribution of mentored nurses has become significant as they engage in professional socialization and expand professional knowledge (Dorsey & Baker, 2004).

The transformation of a mentee to be a future mentor appears to be a climax in the process of mentoring as it fosters continuity of the process. Kopp and Hinkle (2006)

emphasized a "ripple effect" in an effective mentoring. This effect demonstrates that mentees are likely to pave the way, and in turn, their mentees will follow and leave their own imprints or legacies.

These discussions illuminate the impact of mentoring in the development of professional nurses in their individual careers and in honing their capabilities to be contributors in the advancement of the nursing profession.

Identifying a Model Case

To provide an exemplar, the author refers to his own experience which exemplifies the concept of mentoring.

Five years ago, I started to teach student nurses in Saint Louis University- School of Nursing with limited experience in teaching. Although my credentials have met the qualifications of a nurse educator, I encountered a dilemma on how to effectively teach what I know. I struggled to be at par with the performance of other educators but slowly I realized that I am becoming desperate to be an "instant expert educator". I felt academically exhausted and almost gave up because I was not contented with the results.

In one of our conferences, a group of senior lecturers known to be experts in their own field offered their intent to assist newly hired faculty members in implementing effective teaching strategies. At that point, I started to acquaint myself with one of the expert lecturers. I was openly accepted and he treated me like a brother. I never felt degraded because of my limitations. He believed in my capabilities to improve because he constantly exposed me to trainings or seminars where I need to analyze and share my ideas.

I keenly observed my mentor in his classes, jotting down his techniques in opening the class, facilitating discussion, delivering the subject matter, and implementation of his teaching styles. Constant communication was evident as my mentor always inquire the outcomes of my lectures and gives feedback on my strengths and weaknesses. His criticisms were given constructively that enabled me to exert more effort in delivering my teaching style. My mentor became my friend and his wife and kids added in my support system.

My mentor has continuously shared his experiences in the clinical area and in teaching emphasizing the do's and don'ts in achieving something. His influence in my personal and professional growth is second to none. After a year, the senior faculty already involved me in planning the course syllabus and subject modules. I have witnessed how the senior faculty consolidates brilliant ideas of other lecturers and execute them successfully. Eventually, I felt that my competency in teaching has greatly improved as evidenced by higher scores in the evaluation and good feedback from the department heads and students. I felt so empowered and more confident in teaching. Indeed, I gained competence from the supervision of my mentor.

Now, as I enter my 6th year in teaching, I engage myself in actively supporting newly hired faculty members. This act is not to satisfy self-interest but to communicate that I also started somewhere and was nurtured appropriately. When the time comes, they will also contribute in the development of new faculty members.

Conclusion

Mentoring is a way of advancing the nursing profession by strengthening its members. The benefit gained from mentoring occurs at personal, institutional, and societal levels. At a personal level, students and novice nurses are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitude. Being competent in implementing nursing practice reflects the quality of services provided by the institutions where they belong. Collectively, the positive outcomes achieved by institutions illuminate the capability of nurses to be globally competitive.

Lack of mentoring opportunities may play a central role in the stagnation of nursing knowledge and dissatisfaction of nurses in their practice. Consequently, the productivity of nurses will be decreased and the consumers of care suffer the consequences.

Nurses who portray expertise in theoretical knowledge and clinical practice play an important role for the next generations of nurses. As leaders, their role in directing nurses towards excellence will greatly advance the nursing profession. Bridging the gap between theory and practice is inculcated in the roles of mentors as they transcend their expertise to less experienced nurses. This outcome will be close to reality as nurse leaders continuously engage in transforming nursing through research and evidence-based practice.

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“GOOD WORDS
ARE WORTH MUCH,
AND COST LITTLE.”

George Herbert, *Jacula Prudentum*
(19610; cited in Bartlett, 1968, p. 324a; Roper & Shapira, p. 39)