

Abstract

Self-directed learning: Perceptions of nurse educators and pre-registration nursing students. A hermeneutic phenomenological study.

Background

Changing demands on the nursing workforce in the United Kingdom has led to changes in undergraduate nursing education. Educating adults has to include an element of expected autonomy. But how far can you go, and what do nursing students and educators really think of its efficacy and what should happen during those times of 'self-direction'. This controversial area is taken for granted and assumptions are made but seldom researched in terms of perceptions and expectations and realities. This hermeneutic phenomenological study examined the perceptions and lived experiences of nurse educators and pre-registration nursing students on the concept and nature of SDL.

Method

Data were collected from 6 nurse educators and 6 pre-registration nursing students from all four branches of nursing. Semi-structured interviews provided the opportunity for participants to relate their individual perspectives. Thematic analysis was utilised to identify themes.

Findings indicated that both nurse educators and students did not fully understand the concepts and purpose of SDL.

There were divergent expectations on the part of students and nurse educators, and inconsistencies on the part of nurse educators were revealed by students.

Students were unclear about what their role as a self-directed learner entailed and preferred face to face contact.

Students felt inadequately prepared for practice and believed that teaching was not innovative enough to meet their individual needs.

Conclusion

The progression of SDL requires a shift in emphasis from teaching to facilitation. All nurse educators need to firstly have and understand the theoretical underpinnings of teaching and learning to introduce SDL successfully within the undergraduate curriculum.

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Maxine Pryce-Miller is a qualified adult and paediatric nurse who has been in nurse education since 2005. She has an avid interest in teaching and learning and believes that students should have the best experience that is possible. To that end she has written and published a number of articles on supporting students in their academic and clinical environment. The abstract submitted is her doctoral thesis due for submission in July 2014.