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DEVELOPING NURSES AS MENTORS AND EDUCATORS IN PRACTICE – ANALYZING SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT NETWORKS

Julie-Ann MacLaren*

*University of London, UK

Statement Supervised practice as a mentor is an integral component of professionally-accredited nurse mentor education, and is essential to the development of robust undergraduate workplace learning and assessment. However, the literature tends to focus on the mentor-student relationship rather than the relationships facilitating mentors' workplace learning. This paper begins to redress this gap in the literature by asking the research question: Which relationships are important in developing nurses as mentors in practice, and how are their mentorship impacted by professional, Organizational and political agendas in NHS settings? A qualitative case study of two NHS Trusts was undertaken utilizing a range of data collection methods. In order to explore supervisory and supportive relationships whilst studying for an approved mentorship award (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2008) semi-structured interviews were undertaken with three recently qualified mentors. A snowball interview technique (Noy, 2008) enabled access to those they identified as significant in their own learning to become mentors, who were similarly interviewed about their developmental and support network in practice. In total six mentors were interviewed. Additional Interviews with nurses in senior NHS Trust-based educational roles, and senior policy-making and education figures augmented these initial interviews. In another strand of the research, professional mentorship standards (NMC, 2008) were mapped across each of the mentors' interview data to gain an idea of their penetration into practice. Finally, each interview participant developed a developmental mentorship network diagram (Dobrow & Higgins, 2005) which identified colleagues significant to their own development as a mentor or educator, and the attributes which enabled this (Andrews & Chilton, 2000; Darling, 1984). The findings reveal complex learning relationships and situational factors affecting mentor development and on-going practice. They suggest that traditional dyadic forms of supervisory mentorship may not offer the range of skills and attributes that developing mentors require. Mentor network type, orientation to learning, learning strategies and organizational focus emerge as the foci of tensions in learning to be a mentor. The study recommends that nursing teams in acute areas further develop a shared culture of learning and development in providing multiple opportunities for supporting developing mentors.

Biography

Julie-Ann MacLaren is an experienced nurse educator who is currently Deputy Divisional Lead for Nursing at the School of Health Sciences; City, University of London. Her expertise and passion lies in developing and improving workplace learning for student nurses and midwives. This was the focus of her 2012 doctoral thesis entitled 'Inside Mentoring Relationships: Influences and Impacts on Mentorship Learning for Acute Care Nurses Working in the NHS' (Institute of Education, University College London)

julie.maclaren.1@city.ac.uk

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