

Analysis of the Academic Nurse Educator

The nurse education is extremely important because the nurse education, to a significant extent, defines the professionalism and effectiveness of the work of nurses and the quality of nursing care. In such a situation, the role of the academic nurse educator can hardly be underestimated. The professional education and development of nurses is grounded on their academic background because academic development of nurses lays the foundation to their professional work in the hospital environment. In other words, the academic development is essential since it shapes the theoretical bases of nurses' professional skills and knowledge on the ground of which they gradually develop practical skills and abilities. In such a context, the academic nurse educator performs the role of a guide who directs the academic development of nurses and the major goal of the academic nurse educator is to develop skills and efficient approaches which can help nurses acquire new theoretical knowledge and apply them in practice independently of educators. In this regard, the academic nurse educator should assist nurses in their education, but it is impossible or, at least, ineffective to impose a definite set of knowledge which nurses should acquire in the course of learning and training. In actuality, such rigidity of education of nurses is ineffective because the progress of modern science and medicine stimulates new discoveries and wide introduction of innovations, which nurses should be able to apply in their nursing practice. The latter implies that the academic nurse educator should prepare nurses to autonomous and independent learning.

Obviously, the academic nurse educator needs to meet several basic requirements. First of all, the academic nurse educator has to be a well-qualified health care professional with an extensive professional, practical experience. Secondly, the academic nurse educator should be a good educator that means that he or she should have a set of professional skills and abilities, as well as advanced methods of teaching which can help him or her to teach and train nurses efficiently. In addition, the academic nurse educator should be able to find an

individual approach to each nurse in order to apply the most efficient methods on the ground of personal characteristics of each nurse. What is meant here is the fact that the personal characteristics influence consistently the learning process. As a result, it is necessary to use methods and approaches which meet individual, psychological characteristics of nurses in order to maximize the efficiency of training of nurses. Finally, the academic nurse educator should be able to provide nurses with autonomy in their education because they need to be able to acquire new knowledge, develop new skills and abilities independently of educators. Therefore, the academic nurse educator should be rather a guide than a teacher for nurses.

On analyzing the requirements, the academic nurse educator should meet, it is possible to develop a list of roles the academic nurse educator should perform in his or her professional work. In this respect, it should be said that the academic nurse educator should perform the role of the leader. It is very important to be a leader because the role of a leader helps the academic nurse educator to gain the confidence of nurses and guide them in the course of training. In fact, nurses should follow the academic nurse educator's lead in order to achieve positive academic results. Consequently, if the academic nurse educator fails to be a leader he or she can hardly make nurses to be able to learn autonomously. In such a way, the efficiency of nurse training can decrease substantially. In addition, the academic nurse educator should be a good psychologist. The role of psychologist is essential because it helps the academic nurse educator to establish contacts and positive relationships with learners and, therefore, the academic nurse educator can find an individual approach to each nurse. Naturally, the academic nurse educator should also perform the role of a mentor, a person who is experienced in nurse care and who has extensive professional knowledge. In such a way, the academic nurse educator can show nurse the positive model or models of behavior which they may follow in their professional work, at least, at the early stage of their professional career.

In such a way, the academic nurse educator is a job which includes complex skills and abilities which are not necessarily related directly to the nurse care and nurse education. In this respect, it is possible to distinguish skills which are directly related to the professional work and education of nurses and skills which are mainly needed for educational purposes and are not directly related to the professional work of nurses. On the one hand, the academic nurse educator is a professional nurse educator who has an extensive professional experience in both education and nurse care. The latter means that the academic nurse educator should have a solid academic, theoretical background as well as practical experience of work in the field of nurse care and health care services at large. In such a way, the job of the academic nurse educator combines both theoretical knowledge and empirical background of the educator. On the other hand, the professional academic nurse educator should have an extensive theoretical and practical experience in the field of psychology. In addition, the academic nurse educator should be a leader who is able to gain the confidence of learners and guide them in the course of training to help them realize their full potential and, what is more important, the academic nurse educator should be a mentor who assists nurses allowing them to learn autonomously. Consequently, the job of the academic nurse educator is based on flexible approach to learners as well as to the education process itself.

In such a situation, it is extremely important to create a positive atmosphere in the learning setting. It is important to lay emphasis on the fact that learners, i.e. nurses should be really concerned with their academic successes. At the same time, they need to feel the support of the academic nurse educator. Otherwise, they may lose their self-confidence that can have a negative impact on their learning and training. The development of professional skills and abilities as well as the formation of a solid theoretical basis of nurses should be accompanied by the combination of theoretical, academic studies and practical application of knowledge, skills and abilities nurses develop in the course of training. Therefore, the

atmosphere should be supportive. In addition, the academic nurse educator should develop team work of nurses because, even though often nurses may need to act autonomously, they still normally work in a team with other health care professionals. Consequently, they need to feel the atmosphere of the team work, which may be created through the organization of the group work of nurses in the course of training. Moreover, the academic nurse educator should prepare nurses to work in different environments. Obviously, nurses should be able to work not only in the hospital environment, but also in the situation of emergency. This means that the academic nurse educator should introduce elements of problem solving tasks and urgent situations, when nurses should take decisions fast and they should get accustomed to work in emergent environment.

On the other hand, the academic nurse educator is vulnerable to the impact of environment. In actuality, this means that the academic nurse educator should be able to work in a different setting since learners can have different characters, norms of behavior, and the level of professional education and training (Hooks, 1994). Therefore, the academic nurse educator should be able to adapt to each student and, simultaneously, be able to involve all students in the learning process. Basically, the academic nurse educator should be aware of his or her professional responsibilities and he or she should be not only an educator but also a learner or researcher since it is important to extend professional and skills in order to be able to maintain a positive atmosphere during the training and demonstrate the high level of professionalism to students.

It proves beyond a doubt that the academic nurse educator can face numerous challenges in the course of the training. In this respect, it is possible to use the learner-centered approach which is considered to be highly efficient because it allows educators to reveal the full potential of students. Moreover, if the academic nurse educator uses the learner-centered approach, he or she is able to gain the confidence of each student and become a true leader

who can guide students through learning and training. At the same time, the learner-centered approach facilitates the development of a positive model of behavior which students can follow in their own professional work. In addition, team work can help the academic nurse educator to solve the problem of disorganized work of students since, when they work in teams or groups, they learn to cooperate and, what is more, they develop closer social and interpersonal relations, which help them interact with each other and, therefore, achieve better results in the training.

The efficient training of nurses is possible on the condition of the efficient combination of academic learning and professional practice. In actuality, this means that the academic nurse educator should encourage students to use various sources of information which can provide them with valuable professional knowledge, including online sources as well as print media (Hart, 2004). At the same time, the academic nurse trainer should teach learners to distinguish reliable sources of information from unreliable ones. For instance, it is obvious that the use of academic journals is more efficient and reliable than the use of newspapers. Students should learn to search for new information and do it efficiently. In this regard, they may need to work with search engines, various databases and other means which they can use for the search of the information. In addition, the academic nurse educator should provide learners with the possibility to apply their skills and knowledge in practice. Consequently, it is necessary to use facilities where students can apply their knowledge and skills in practice.

In this respect, the transition from education to practice is very important because often nurses face a problem of the efficient implementation of their knowledge and skills, which they have acquired in the course of training, in the real life situations, when they start working. In such a situation, the practice during the training is particularly important. At the same time, the academic nurse educator should develop self-confidence of nurses through

posing them difficult tasks, which they can solve, but they need to apply a lot of efforts to fulfill the tasks. At this point, it is very important to maintain the high level of difficulty of tasks, but, it is necessary to remember that tasks should be difficult but affordable to students and meet their current level of academic development (Limentani, 1999). Eventually, the academic nurse educator should allow students to apply their knowledge and skills in the simulation of real life situations, while on the last stages of training nurses should have an opportunity to work in the real life setting, while the academic nurse educator should perform the role of mentor who controls and, if necessary, helps students in the nurse care services.

At the same time, it is important to remember that nurse education is a two-sided process. It is not only the work of the academic nurse educator that defines the overall success of education, but it is also the learning of students, their learning abilities, skills and desire to learn that define the effectiveness of the training process. In this respect, students should develop efficient learning styles, while the academic nurse educator should help them to develop such learning styles. In fact, the most efficient learning style includes the combination of theory and practice, when the material students learn in the course of their training is applied in practice. In this regard, the use of drills is possible since nurses should be able to provide basic nurse care services automatically without wasting time on long-lasting reflections. In addition, students should learn to take decision fast that is a crucial condition of the efficient work of a professional nurse.

In such a context, the communication between the academic nurse educator and students is particularly important. In fact, communication gaps between educators and learners undermine the efficiency and positive outcomes of the training and learning. Therefore, both the academic nurse educator and students should develop an efficient communication style. Obviously, the academic nurse educator should develop a positive communication model. As a rule, a democratic communication style is considered to be

efficient in the course of learning (Anyon, 1992), but it is important to remember that the academic nurse educator should remain a leader, who provides learners with positive models of behavior. Therefore, the academic nurse educator should balance the positive interpersonal relationships and his or her authority as a leader. In such a way, students will be able to feel relaxed during the training due to positive interpersonal relations and democratic communication, while, on the other hand, they will respect the academic nurse educator as a leader.

In addition, the academic nurse educator should focus not only on professional characteristics and professional training but also on ethical issues. Being a leader, the academic nurse educator should provide student with a positive model of behavior which should meet not only professional requirements in a nursing care setting, but also to ethical norms which are common in the health care environment. It is important to remember about the fact that the professional ethic is of the utmost importance for professional nurses, Moreover, professional ethics of nurses is closely intertwined with legal issues which may arise in case of violation of ethical norms.

Furthermore, in order to maximize the efficiency of training, the academic nurse educator needs to develop a personal philosophy which could meet the existing requirements and needs of the professional work of nurses. The personal philosophy should grant the academic nurse educator with practical opportunities to become a true leader and a model for nurses. In fact, the personal philosophy of the academic nurse educator should set standards which students have to meet in the course of their training. In such a way, it is possible to spread basic values of nursing care practices promoted through the personal philosophy of the academic nurse educator.

As for the academic nurse educator, he or she should not only help students to develop their professional skills and abilities and acquire professional knowledge, but the academic nurse educator should also develop an efficient of assessment and evaluation of students' achievements. Ideally, the academic nurse educator should trace the development of each student and reward each student respectively to the progress the particular students makes in the learning process. At the same time, the academic nurse educator need to use the common standards which all students should meet. These standards are the basis of the efficient control over students' progress.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the professional development of nurses highly depends on the efficient work of academic nurse educator. The academic nurse educator should be a mentor, a guide to students who assist them to develop their professional skills and abilities. Finally, the academic nurse educator should be a leader who is able to develop positive interpersonal relationships and apply efficient communication styles.

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