ACCELERATED NURSING PROGRAMMES FOR GRADUATES: HOW DO INTERACTIONS BETWEEN POSTGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS AND THEIR MENTORS INFLUENCE THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN PRACTICE

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Research Question
How and to what extent do the interactions between students and their mentors influence a student’s learning in practice?

Background
Accelerated Programmes
- Little UK research focused on needs of postgraduates undertaking pre-registration programmes
- Halkett and Mc Lafferty (2006) evaluation study highlighted need for learning in practice
- Cangelosi (2007) USA. Learning and teaching strategies need to recognise prior learning
- Penprase and Koczara (2009) in a review of second degree programmes in America identified that these students are adult learners and programmes need to cater for their need to be autonomous and independent.

Mentorship
- Wilkes (2006) review of student-mentor relationships. Qualities valued were friendly, approachable mentors.
- Gray and Smith (2000) positive supportive approach. Students wanted quality time with mentor and consistent and genuine feedback

Methods
- An interpretivist ontological approach underpins the study.
- Interpretive paradigm focuses upon subjective experience and personal, unique nature of this knowledge for individuals (Denzin and Lincoln 2000)
- Qualitative case study to explore in depth within real life context (Yin 2009)
- Unit of analysis was student-mentor dyads and their experiences
- Six students and their mentors (18) during four consecutive placements over one year (Adult, Child, Mental Health)
- Ethical approval and consent obtained
- Semi-structured interviews
- Data analysis mapping themes and subthemes for students and their mentors
- Framework analysis (Ritchie et al. 2003) and Case study analysis (Stake 1995)

Findings

Learning opportunities
Students were predominately self directed and sought out opportunities and were keen to learn.
“put yourself forward…I am more assertive and I think that helps. I am continually asking… I don’t give up easily”
Anne P3, p2

Missed opportunities. Some students felt they were not invited to observe aspects of care or were given simple tasks rather than be involved in more complex aspects of care.

Trust/confidence/challenge
Trust and confidence developed through guidance and support.
“ I don’t know I just fitted in quite well and I wasn’t isolated as a student…they trusted me to do things and made me feel comfortable”
Pauline P3, p8

Direct to indirect supervision involvement in increasingly complex activities.
“once you know they can do the observations and report back to you…I have to rely on them, big no if don’t report back, once rely on them you can add on… start with simple things, have they got the basics…then expand starting linking and thinking for themselves and you can actually see the development in them”

Summary and Implications
- Developing effective relationships with mentors is crucial for students to facilitate their access to and engagement with patients and their care.
- Graduate students learn quickly and in different ways and the variety of learning environments enhanced their self directed, independent, questioning approach to learning.
- Graduate students were able to critically analyse practice and reflect on care decisions from an early stage of the programme.
- These approaches to learning seemed to be facilitated more readily by the more experienced mentors in this study. They were able to provide a level of knowledge and support which enhanced these students ability to learn through critical thinking, challenge and supporting their independent approaches to learning.
- This small case study has highlighted the unique needs of postgraduate students and how they learn and need to be supported in clinical practice.

References

M14, p7