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Practicing Leadership Skills through Peer Mentoring and Teaching: the Lived Experience of BSN Students

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Abstract:

Although leadership theory is introduced in baccalaureate nursing curriculum, opportunities to practice and develop leadership skills are limited for undergraduate nursing students. This study explores the experience of advanced nursing students who provided mentoring and tutoring to beginning nursing students. The experiences they describe are interpreted in light of literature on leadership education in undergraduate nursing schools, as well as that of peer mentoring and peer teaching. These advanced students described opportunities to practice and reflect on leadership skills and attributes. Peer mentoring and peer teaching programs may be an effective and efficient way of helping nursing students gain leadership skills and experience.

Keywords: nursing leadership, nursing education, peer-mentoring, nursing leadership skills, peer-teaching, nursing leadership education

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Nursing thought-leaders have called for innovation in nursing education and for nurses to be prepared to assume leadership roles (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, Day, & Shulman, 2009; Institute of Medicine, 2011, 2016). Although leadership theory is introduced in baccalaureate level in nursing curricula (AACN, 2008), opportunities to practice and develop leadership skills are often limited for undergraduate nursing students (Hendricks, Cope, & Harris, 2010; Kalb, O'Conner-Von, Schipper, Watkins, & Yetter, 2012). In this article, explored is the experience of advanced nursing students supporting learning of beginning nursing students while developing their leadership skills.

Background and frame of reference

The study took place in a baccalaureate nursing program located within a small, private, liberal arts university in the United States of America (USA). When faculty undertook a curriculum change, a large cohort of students (n = 56) were required to complete the beginning Fundamentals of Nursing and Physical Assessment courses during a five-week period over the summer. Faculty recognized the difficulty of teaching the this course effectively in a short time frame, but viewed this as a challenge and an opportunity, and decided to create a support system that might benefit both students and faculty. Several advanced students and recent graduates were hired to connect with the new students, help socialize them to nursing and to their role as nursing students, help with stress management, and support them academically as needed. Faculty members expected this might be a valuable experience for the hired students. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of advanced students and recent graduates.

The theoretical framework for this study was narrative pedagogy. Grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology, narrative pedagogy (Dieckelmann & Dieckelmann, 2009; Dieckelmann, 2001; Ironside 2003; 2004; 2005; 2015) offers a research-based approach to nursing education that involves students and faculty reflecting on and interpreting their experiences. Through creating and sharing their narrative, the participants incorporate what they learn into understanding of their own developing identities as professional nurses. Ironside (2015) summarized research on narrative pedagogy and described it as a phenomenological nursing pedagogy through which faculty and students collectively explore their experience and open current understandings and assumptions for questioning. Dieckelmann (2001) posits that this engagement in conversation provokes fresh thinking and develops new understandings for both students and faculty.

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Literature review

There are some, but not many, published studies of strategies for teaching leadership that describe innovations and outcomes for programs designed for that purpose (Morrow, 2015). Waite, Mckinney, Smith-Glasgow, and Meloy (2014) described a course developed to teach authentic leadership in a one-unit course over a semester. They encouraged the use of critical pedagogy and the practice of engaging learner-centered strategies that value the diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and ideas inherent in leadership development (Waite et al., 2014). Towle (2015) described a study of leadership skills developed in a study-abroad program in over two sequential spring break immersion clinical experiences in Jamaica.

Researchers have cited a lack of opportunities for students to practice leadership skills and to engage in the process of organizational change (Morrow, 2015; Towle, 2015; Hendricks et al., 2010). Kalb et al. (2012) and Morrow (2015) both described a lack of research on how educators prepare nursing students to be leaders. Kalb et al. (2012) studied nursing faculty at one university and discovered that commonly used strategies were role-modeling and thought exercises. Faculty also encouraged and supported students in their efforts to problem-solve and lead on-campus activities. Hendricks et al. (2010) called for putting students in charge of organizing events on campus with support of faculty (Hendricks et al., 2010). Tablowski (2016) described a program, New Careers in Nursing (NCIN) funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Report, which had an emphasis on leadership development. The activity described was a student-focused leadership conference organized by students who were mentored in this process by faculty using Benner's (1984) model of skill acquisition.

Morrow (2015) synthesized studies of leadership curricula in baccalaureate nursing programs. Based on this literature review, peer-learning strategies were promoted as a cost-effective and particularly promising approach to the development of leadership skills and abilities. Near-peer teaching can benefit the near-peer teachers by helping them integrate knowledge, practice deeper and reflective learning, enhance metacognition, and increase confidence, as well as gain teaching skills (Irvine, Williams, & McKenna, 2018; Kramer, Hillman, & Zavala, 2018).

Much has been written about the need for mentoring within nursing and about its benefits to the profession (Benner et al., 2009; Jacobs, 2017; Weese, Jakubik, Eliades, & Huth, 2015; Harmer, Huffman, & Johnson, 2011; Wong, Stake-Doucet, Lombardo, Sanzone, & Tsimicalis, 2016). Within higher education, mentoring has been identified as a high-impact practice that supports student success (Dennison, 2010; Glass & Walter, 2000; Race & Skees, 2010; Ross, Bruderle, & Meakim, 2015). Peer-mentoring can provide mentees with academic, emotional, and social support (Jacobs, 2017; Wong et al., 2016) and is fairly well established in the literature as being academically, socially, and professionally beneficial to participants (Benner et al., 2009; Jacobs, 2017; Vandal et al., 2018; Wong et al., 2016).

While studies of mentoring usually focus on benefits to the mentees, such as emotional, social, and academic support (Kramer et al., 2018; Wong et al., 2016), some researchers have inquired into the experience of the mentors (Jacobs, 2017; Vandal et al., 2018) and found benefits for them as well (Jacobs, 2017; Wong et al., 2016). In a qualitative, descriptive study of nursing student peer-mentors, Vandal et al. (2018) explored the relationship of mentor-mentee pairs and developed themes that mostly focused on the why and how of mentoring with some discussion of the skills gained by the mentor. These skills included communication, collaboration, active listening, self-reflection, and priority-setting. Jacobs (2017) performed a scoping review that considered literature on peer-mentorship in nursing education published between 2010 and 2015. The synthesis of that literature revealed four themes: enhanced communication skills; socialized learning, including learning about others; learning about oneself; and learning to teach. Some authors stress the importance of mentoring in the development of leadership skills (Benner et al., 2009; Hendricks et al., 2010). Weese et al. (2015) described six mentoring practices that lead to specific outcomes for practicing nurses. The sixth is "equipping for leadership", which they have linked to leadership preparedness in nurses (Weese et al., 2015). Smith, Hober, and Harding (2017) implemented a program of peer-mentoring and found, in a self-report survey of mentors, that "96 % (26/27) felt this program contributed to their leadership development (Smith et al., 2017)." Several studies described growth by peer-mentors in areas relevant to leadership (Jacobs, 2017; Vandal et al., 2018; Wong et al., 2016) However, mentoring programs have not often been studied with leadership skills, specifically as outcome criteria.

In fact, there is no clear consensus on what leadership competencies should be expected of nursing students prior to graduation (Morrow, 2015; Towle, 2015). However, a synthesis of the literature identified certain skills and attributes as important for nurse leaders. According to Hendricks et al. (2010), Kalb et al. (2012), Towle (2015), and Waite et al. (2014), these include social skills, such as effective communication, collaboration, and working with group dynamics, as well as cognitive skills, such as effective problem-solving, rational decision-making, and good judgment. Self-awareness and moral commitment were deemed essential.

Methods

Ethical considerations

Approval for this study was obtained from the University Institutional Review Board. Written consent was obtained from the tutor/mentors for their participation. Data were gathered during a focus group by audio recording the conversation that took place between the tutor/mentors and two lead faculty members at the end of the semester. All participants affirmed a commitment to confidentiality and identifying information was deleted from the presentation. The conversation was transcribed. Field notes were taken during the conversation, allowing the researcher to note nuances in conversational tone, body language, group interactions, and other observational details that might add to the interpretive work.

Program goals and participants

Five advanced students and recent alumni were selected to participate as leaders because they had demonstrated academic excellence, academic integrity, and leadership potential through interactions with other students and with faculty members. They were between the ages of 20 and 34. Two participants had just graduated and were preparing for RN licensing examination (NCLEX). Two others were entering the senior year and one was entering the junior year. Three were women and two were men. They were paid out of a small grant provided by a local philanthropist who desired to strengthen nursing education.

The participants were oriented as a group at the beginning of the semester by two lead faculty, one of whom was the researcher, who supervised them throughout the semester, met with them weekly as a group, and conducted the focus group discussion at the end of the program. These advanced student participants were instructed by faculty to connect with beginning students, help them socialize to their role as nursing students, assist with stress management, and support them academically as needed. Although initially referred to as tutors, the activities in which they engaged and connections made were more closely associated with mentoring. Peer-teaching is generally associated with the acquisition of skills and knowledge (Irvine et al., 2018; Nelwati, Abdulla, & Chan, 2018; Robinson & Niemer, 2010) while peer-mentoring is more often associated with developmental guidance and emotional and social support (Dennison, 2010; Glass & Walter, 2000; Jacobs, 2017; Race & Skees, 2010; Ross et al., 2015). Because of the combined roles, the participants in this leadership program were referred to as tutor/mentors.

The tutor/mentors were also encouraged to facilitate conversations that focused on problem identification and problem-solving. They were expected to communicate program-related problems to supervising faculty expeditiously and to participate in the problem-solving process. Faculty and some of the tutor/mentors involved had previously identified a mutual concern about students' poor communication skills in general and an increase in cheating on exams. Because of this, a deliberate decision was made to attempt to influence the culture of the new students by stressing the importance of academic and professional integrity as part of the socialization process.

In the first class of the semester, the tutor/mentors were introduced to the beginning students and each one was assigned a lab group with whom to work. They had up to 20 hours per week to meet with individuals and small groups of students as they progressed through an intensive summer semester. Faculty met with the group of tutor/mentors weekly during the semester to discuss their interactions with students.

Data collection and analysis process

Consistent with the interpretive assumptions of narrative pedagogy, a hermeneutic phenomenological method of data collection and analysis was employed. The iterative nature of this approach allowed the researchers to identify themes that arose from the text of the recorded conversation and to interpret what was learned in light of scholarly work on the subject of leadership skills and attributes. Literature on peer-mentoring and peer-teaching was also reviewed and incorporated in order to understand the relationships between the advanced students hired and those who were beginning their studies.

Ricoeur (1981) acknowledges the intersubjective nature of social knowledge. In this approach to research, distanciation is achieved by setting the co-shared discourse into text that may then be approached and interpreted as one would any other text (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar, & Dowling, 2015; Ricoeur, 1981). Benner (1994) states, "Each interpreter enters the interpretive circle by examining preunderstandings and confronting otherness, silence, similarities, and commonalities from his or her own particular historical, cultural, and historical

stance (Benner 1994 pg. xviii).” Leonard (1994 p. 58) states “In hermeneutics, the role of theory is to show up meanings that arise out of the lived experience, to create new possibilities for understanding.” Leonard continues, explaining that this allows for “a more tactful and thoughtful practical engagement with the phenomenon under investigation.”

In the interpretive research tradition, the pre-understandings of the researcher are understood as integral to the process of interpretation (Heidegger, 1962; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015; Ricoeur, 1981). The researcher is expected to exercise openness and reflexivity to developing new understandings. In this study, the faculty members supervising the tutor/mentors expected that tutor/mentors would have learned something of value during their experience and that discussing their experiences would be valued. Faculty members initiated the interview with an invitation to the students to discuss what their experience had been and how it had influenced them. The conversation was not structured and became free-flowing with the tutor/mentors taking the lead in discussing and reflecting on their encounters with students. The conversation was then transcribed and fixed as text.

The researcher then explored the literature on mentoring, peer teaching, nursing leadership skills and attributes, and leadership education in pre-licensure programs. The data were then reviewed again in light of the literature, using an interpretive phenomenological approach, holding assumptions open for questioning. In order to support rigor, an experienced qualitative researcher colleague who was not part of the data collection process was invited to review the transcript, provide an alternative viewpoint, and assist in coding and interpretation.

Findings

The transcript from the conversation with the faculty and tutor/mentors was examined and five categories emerged. These included communication and collaborative skills, perceptions of group dynamics, problem solving and decision-making, self-knowledge, and moral commitment.

Communication and collaboration

Communication and collaborative skills, such as listening, persuading, encouraging, problem-solving, and building alliances, are vital for nurse-leaders (Waite et al., 2014; Towle, 2012; Hendricks et al., 2010). The tutor-mentors described many opportunities to practice communication skills and reported growth in this area. One student stated: “together we were stronger.” Another summed it up: “I think the biggest part is learning how to communicate with other people. I think that was the biggest thing and just help ... helping yourself learn how to best present something, say something, and give them feedback.” The others agreed, with one stating, “You have to be diplomatic.” Another added, “I had to be organized, I had to communicate, I had to step up and sometimes step out of my comfort zone.”

Participants also reflected on the significance of communication in addressing fears and frustration felt by student mentees. One tutor/mentor referred to a study she had read about how communication between nurses and patients waiting in a busy emergency department can relieve stress and decrease anger in the waiting room. She reflected on the significance of that type of communication, applying it to the students in her group and observing that giving students information helped decrease their anxiety and defused frustration. “You could give them that ... that bit of feedback ... a little bit of communication to kind of calm them down.” She also learned to set a tone with communication:

When we all first met on the first day, the first thing I told them was I’m here for you, and you guys are here for you. Utilize each other as well as me. And I think they took advantage of that advice and having multiple meetings and being together just created the bond.

The tutor/mentors formed alliances and collaborated with the member of their groups and with each other. Two of them “decided to try something where we invited our groups to get together. [We] worked together with them over the weekend and I think the two of us together were really good.” They described how the dialogue between them helped students follow their thinking and stimulated them to ask questions.

They also recognized the social nature of alliances formed through similarities. “I have a lot of adult learners and I think that creates a bond as well. We all have kids at home and we’re trying to go through this, so let’s stick together and do this together because we’re going through the same things. I could definitely see that.” This example demonstrates the development of insight about the formation of alliances built on similarities but is also an observation about the dynamics of that particular group.

Group dynamics

The tutor-mentors described opportunities to build skills and knowledge around group dynamics. They reflected on what they observed within their groups. "I liked watching the group dynamics and how they ... problem solved and worked together ... how they made it work was amazing." Another participant discussed engaging students in the creation of "ground rules": "on an easel or dry erase board and just say 'OK, what kind of ground rules do you guys want to have as a group' and let them come up with it. It means so much more than somebody telling them". They also recognized that each group is unique. "There's also the point that every group has different needs. So, if I were to do this again, my focus could be completely different." And, "You have to be able to adapt to what the group needs are, so you have to be flexible." They demonstrated situational awareness and changed their approach in order to be more effective: "That's when I was like 'OK I need to switch things up because clearly I'm not meeting with my group enough.' So that's when I implemented the structure of '3 times a week I'll be at the library'". It was also important to recognize what was working, "If I went in with more direction, they were responsive to that."

Waite et al. (2014) and Benner et al. (2009) claim that leadership involves shaping culture and engaging in the process of change. The tutor-mentors had the opportunity to shape the culture of their groups by the way they welcomed them and interacted with them. For instance,

Some people say they didn't like working in groups. I got to say to them 'Well you know it's one of the things you're going to have to do throughout your nursing education is work with another nurse. You're always going to be in a pair and you're always going to have to figure out what they want you to do, what you're going to do for them and be able to communicate'.

Hendricks et al. (2010) states that leadership involves the ability to foster optimism and find opportunities while Waite et al. (2014) describe the ability to challenge and inspire others. One tutor/mentor reflected, "I think it changes morale by having a group of students who are doing this from a positive perspective as opposed to somebody who just wants to complain about what they went through with another faculty member or a class or the subject matter or whatever ..." She described how students sometimes became fearful of certain classes or teachers based on rumors. She told them to be open to the idea that they might develop a different type of relationship with those teachers because each student is different. She shared her perspective with students and redirected them away from fear and towards positive possibilities. She added, "I think having a structured group like you're saying helps for so many reasons with changing the whole morale of the groups and classes."

Problem-solving and decision-making

Hendricks et al. (2010) emphasizes the need for leadership skills such as problem-solving and strategizing, reasoned judgment, and rational decision-making. The tutor/mentors gave several examples of opportunities to engage in those activities and then reflect on the outcomes. "They seemed to get a lot out of us discussing our thought process over questions so they could hear how we started to reason through things." Irvine et al. (2018) claim that having students teach other students results in deeper learning and enhanced metacognition, as well as consolidation of knowledge. The participants gave examples of walking their students through the critical thinking process:

When they came to a speed bump where they all were like 'OK now what', that's when our role came in and it was 'OK let's stop and think about this, let's read the question again, what information do you need'.

One statement exhibited discernment and judgment about the group discussions. "They will get caught on one thing and won't move on or just get stuck on something." This participant went on to reflect on how he developed a strategy for persuading the group to move forward. "It's easy to get lost in the minutia on some of this stuff." He noted opportunities "to be able to pull the discussion back and look at the big picture." Another reflected on the opportunity to challenge students in their groups to think about things in a different way: "I think it's also reframing responses from an emotional response to a more logistical, practical one."

Self-Knowledge

Self-knowledge is essential to effective leadership (Kalb et al., 2012; Waite et al., 2014; Towle, 2012; Hendricks et al. 2010). The tutor/mentors described their experiences with teaching and leading groups and reflected on

those experiences in terms of their understanding of themselves. One participant said, "I got perspective on what it takes to teach!" Another agreed. "I really enjoyed it. I found out that I like teaching and I had no idea I like teaching!"

The experience as tutors/mentors changed their understanding of themselves as they observed their own responses to being in a leadership role. One reported, "It let me use those muscles in a way that I hadn't ... it gave me some validation". Another reflected on the experience of being designated as a leader, "All of a sudden we were in a leadership role and, you know, we weren't going through the same classes as our group was and so sometimes I just kind of ... I felt like a little bit of an outsider in a way." He also reflected on his ability to influence the group. "I liked the fact that I could guide them, guide their conversations, and guide their thoughts ... they will be thinking one way and then I can kind of, you know, well what about this?" More directly, one speculated, "I think this role really prepares us for something like that, for a manager position, having to be in a clear leadership position. I think that I learned a lot."

The participants recognized the power of authenticity within leadership described by Waite et al. (2014). One stated, "mentors have to adapt to the students, older, younger, it doesn't matter who, just facilitate that group and be yourself when you do it, don't be fake, because the students will know it when you're fake."

Tutor-mentors also had an opportunity to discuss and reflect on an experience from a previous semester involving one in their group who had been serving as a younger teaching assistant in the skills lab for a class that consisted of many students that were older than she was, including two other tutor/mentors. One of the older participants who had been a beginning student in that class told her: "I remember walking in, and I remember seeing you as our TA and I remember thinking ... she's probably younger than me, she probably thinks she's so cool here as a TA". The older participant described how the younger one had demonstrated competence and an authentic willingness in a way that was not defensive or condescending to assist the older students who were just learning their skills. This authenticity had won the respect of the members of the class she was assisting.

The younger participant responded, "I really had to adjust 'cause ... I'm not going to lie. I was very intimidated by your class. I walked in and I was like, ooohh ... well." The other older participant responded, "And we're a handful!" This class was known to be very assertive and a little rambunctious. The younger participant went on, "I'm pretty sure I went home and talked to my roommate about it. I was like 'they're all older than me ...'" And the first participant said to the group, "She was fabulous." Then went on, directing her comments to the younger participant, "The way you handled it made the world of difference, because you could have handled it a different way and you and I probably wouldn't be sitting here right now ... There'd be some weird kind of animosity or something. But you handled it really well." The act of discussing and reflecting on that experience permitted the whole group to learn about the value of authenticity in leadership. It also affirmed the competence of the younger tutor/mentor in navigating a common leadership challenge, increasing her self-confidence.

One participant attributed his growth in self-confidence to the support given him by faculty. "I think you did a great job too at the beginning when you brought us here. Giving us confidence and support, saying 'we brought you guys here for a reason and we have a lot of faith in you guys' and making us in a sense feel special and honored to be here I think really helped and encouraged us ... " Benner et al. (2009) and Hendricks et al. (2010) claim that mentoring is necessary for the development of leadership skills. Meeting with faculty regularly provided the participants with mentorship for the experience they had that summer and contributed its value for them.

Moral commitment

Nursing leadership also involves moral skills, such as the ability to ensure meaningfulness and to focus on the overall group while acknowledging the individual (Hendricks et al., 2010). "Everybody is a little different too. I mean, I think it helps them understand that everybody has different strengths, different weaknesses, and how they kind of started understanding 'oh so and so needs a lot of time to work through their problems during class and that just helps her process information' and it just gives them insight into themselves and to other people." This observation reflects not only the tutors'/mentors' insight, but also the recognition of growing understanding and acceptance of differences within the group.

Towle (2015) states leaders demonstrate acceptance and a commitment to the wellbeing of others. One participant described her approach to the relationship between herself and the students she worked with as, "I'm a mentor, I'm their friend and I'm compassionate. You need help, I'll help you. Rewarding. I think it's rewarding." They also described a sense of empathy for the students with whom they were and identified that a certain amount of receptivity and flexibility is necessary to be a leader. They described a commitment to prioritize the needs of the group. "A big point of leadership is that it's not your way, you can't be rigid and say it's always going to be this way, you have to be able to facilitate their needs."

They also acknowledged reciprocity in the relationship they had with the students in their groups. One stated, “I think as much as they learn from us, we learn from them.” Another reflected on her experience during the final exam when tutors/mentors were assisting with proctoring the exam:

I noticed that today at their final, I could see them calm down. Like OK, this is familiar, and I actually felt like us being there, even though we’re making sure they weren’t cheating, that there was a familiar face smiling at them if they looked up or were stuck on a problem, and I think that helped them relieve the stress too.

Discussion and significance

Participants in this study reflected on and described opportunities to practice leadership and teaching skills as a valuable experience. The Institutes of Medicine (IOM) report, *The Future of Nursing* (2011), calls for the development of leadership capability for nurses throughout their careers. The update to that report in 2016 states that, although progress has been made in many areas, more focus and attention should be paid to the areas of educational reform and leadership development (Institute of Medicine, 2016). The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) calls for professional nurse graduates to have the capability to participate in system level change in order to deliver high-quality patient care (AACN 2008). This document is currently being revised, but it is expected that this leadership capability will continue to be important in preparation for practice (AACN, 2019). While there are some opportunities to engage students in organizational reform in the clinical arena, engaging them in organizational change within their schools may be a way to develop their capacity to act in organizations and be involved in the programmatic improvement and innovation that is required within nursing education.

While this study was designed to explore the experience of nursing students who were placed into supportive roles called “tutor/mentors,” the data that emerged indicated that the tutor/mentors took advantage of opportunities to practice and reflect on skills that are associated in the literature with effective nursing leadership. According to Benner (1984), reflective practice fosters the development of nursing skills. Benner et al. (2009), Hendricks et al. (2010), McPherson and Macdonald (2017), Valiga (2012), and Waite et al. (2014), all cite an over-reliance on conventional pedagogies and encourage experimentation with alternative teaching such as narrative, interpretive, and critical pedagogies. The practice of involving advanced students in mentoring, teaching, and leading newer students, in combination with a narrative pedagogical approach, offers a cost-effective and efficient way to reinforce learning, provide support for beginning students, develop leadership skills among advanced students, and strengthen the program overall.

Limitations

One limitation to this study is that the program studied was structured to meet a perceived need for academic, social, and emotional support for students during a curriculum transition process and was not specifically designed to study the acquisition of leadership skills. The tutor/mentors had been chosen, in part, for their leadership potential and interest in influencing the group of beginning students. Students with different interests may have constructed a different narrative around the experience. This, however, is consistent with the goals of narrative pedagogy.

It is also possible that not all themes describing the phenomenon were discovered utilizing a single interview session. Participant validation of themes would have strengthened the trustworthiness and reproducibility of the findings but was impractical. Finally, it is possible that a different research method might have revealed different results.

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to explore and develop an understanding of the experience of advanced nursing students supporting beginning nursing students. The tutor/mentor program implemented over the summer provided a learning experience for advanced nursing students and recent alumni that gave them opportunities to learn and practice leadership skills and attributes. They also experienced being involved in program improvement at the organizational level by giving faculty timely feedback through weekly discussions about how

the students were receiving and processing content for each class. This allowed faculty to adjust the course as the semester evolved, rather than discovering problems at the end of the semester. It also provided affirmation for the tutor/mentors regarding their ability to contribute to organizational change. This suggests that research on how this type of program could synergistically strengthen the nursing program would be a topic worthy of research.

In order to fulfill the vision of the IOM report released in 2011 and updated in 2016, nursing faculty need not rely solely upon role modeling and the didactic teaching of leadership theories. The use of alternative pedagogies, such as narrative pedagogy, may be very helpful in terms of cultivating the skills and attributes of leadership within future nursing professionals. Rather than adding to an already overburdened curriculum, programs of nursing may organize and sponsor co-curricular activities, such as mentoring and engaging students in the teaching-learning process as leaders in real situations. While a carefully structured and well-supported mentoring program may serve multiple functions within the academic environment, the development of leadership skills and attributes may well be chief amongst them.

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