

Book Reviews

Community-Based Nursing Education: The Experience of Eight Schools of Nursing

PEGGY S. MATTESON (EDITOR)

Springer Publishing Company, New York (2000)

239 pp., ISBN 0-8261-1323-0 (hbk)

The impetus for health professionals to be able to serve their communities and address the major health problems and needs comes both from the profession and from society. Nursing is no exception and Peggy Matteson as the editor of “Community-Based Nursing Education: The Experience of Eight Schools of Nursing” has drawn on the experiences of eight schools of nursing in the United States to offer a mosaic of community-based nursing education projects. Other nursing schools, which are planning to implement community-based nursing education, could use these as models that they can adapt to fit their context.

Matteson initiated community-based nursing education in the School of Nursing at Northeastern University and has been a frequent consultant to schools developing community-based nursing education programmes. She has brought together the distinctive challenges met as well as the accomplishments achieved, by each school in the process of implementing community-based nursing education.

Matteson sets the scene by stating that “Community-based nursing education brings together three components: the members of the university (students and faculty), the providers in the community, and the members of the community. They work together to create and implement the educational programme”. She differentiates between community health nursing or public health nursing, and community-based nursing education.

The setting of these schools is diverse, ranging from the Massachusetts and Rhode Island area to Florida, New York, North Carolina, and Ohio. The communities they served also varied—from public housing developments to poor inner-city communities, neighbourhoods with culturally diverse ethnic groups, and a rural neighborhood in Jamaica. Yet the experiences shared by the eight schools are similar in some ways but different in others. The similarity lies in the fact that each school found distinct and innovative ways to involve the community as true partners in the process, listening to the needs that community members expressed. The difference is because each school based its educational programme based on the needs and capacities of the community as well as the curriculum of the nursing school.

The examples given by the various schools as they relate their experiences are very uplifting and encouraging for the nursing profession. They show the impact of nursing education on the community and underscore the fact that nursing is an essential social service for all mankind. If there is a major lesson to be learned from this book, it would be that any intervention by nursing students in a community, provided through an understanding of the community members’ needs, i.e. through partnership with the community, can achieve so much more than offering or providing services, which students diagnose as being needed by the community.

Some of the schools included theoretical models that they chose, to guide their implementation of community concepts within the curriculum. Schools that chose diverse ethnic neighbourhoods also described how their students learned cultural competence in the most effective way—through immersion in the cultures of these different ethnic groups. The importance of providing culturally competent care is generally accepted, as it has the potential not only to improve health outcomes but also to increase the satisfaction of patients. Cultural competency of health care providers therefore plays a crucial role and providers need to be trained and assessed on their cultural competency. The community-based nursing education programme was also able to fulfill this important function. Matteson and Zungolo rounded off this remarkable book by summarizing the 10 lessons learned from these programmes. This book will be immensely valuable for faculties in nursing schools who are planning to implement community-based nursing education.

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The Work of Writing: Insights and Strategies for Academics and Professionals

ELIZABETH RANKIN

Jossey-Bass: a Wiley company, San Francisco (2001)

122 pp., ISBN 0-7879-5679-1

“Writing is easy. All you do is stare at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead.” (Gene Fowler)

Most of our knowledge and insights stem from the scientific debate that goes on by means of text, be it in a journal like *Education for Health* or through the Internet. If we want to get our work across, it is therefore necessary that we are able to write our thoughts and findings in such a way that we catch the reader’s attention and keep it.

Rankin’s book *The work of writing* (2001) is a fine text for those who struggle with putting their thoughts on paper. It addresses issues like: “What am I trying to say in this piece of writing? Is it something that others have written about before? If so, what is new and important about what I have to say? Or does my saying it in somewhat different language serve a purpose for those who will read it?” No quick fixes, shortcuts or formulas for academic and professional writing are promised, and indeed, they are not given. However, vivid descriptions of recognisable dilemmas that writers face introduce issues like: “the work of writing”; “contributing to the professional conversation”; “meeting readers’ needs and expectations” and, importantly: “seeing the project through”. In the book attempts are made to make the work of writing easier, more comprehensible, manageable and productive. The author has found a balance between narratives and a clear organization with points of advice. Rankin spends a section on the dilemma between the conventions of writing (in an academic journal for example) and

finding one's own voice. Strategies are given to find a balance between an unreadable text and a too personal essay.

Throughout the book, the importance of *sharing* your early writing attempts is stressed. In every chapter there is a section on "getting feedback from others", suggesting strategies to involve others in order to test how well you have succeeded in getting your message across to others, and how to improve your text. On the other hand, the actual work of writing and the investment that takes is not neglected: in every chapter there is also a section on "writing on your own". These sections give guidelines on how to get started and how to keep on working.

Pertinent throughout the book is the message that writing is something that one cannot do by him/herself. Feedback from others must be sought. In Rankin's view writing groups are an excellent forum for mutual assistance. She argues that it could be beneficial if these groups are composed of writers from different disciplines: what better audience to judge whether you can get your message across? An appendix is devoted to organising writing groups.

The only minor criticism I have about this book is that while it is well written, it is in a colloquial, American style. It may therefore be a little more difficult to follow for readers who are not so familiar with this language. However, in my view the benefits of this book far outweigh this disadvantage. It can be a great help in sharing our findings with others!

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Editor's note:

The title of the last book (Secondary Teacher's Handbook) suggests that it may not be of interest to our readers. However, it contains some very useful information about improving teaching which will be of benefit to all teachers regardless of level. Also, the reviewer's mention of the "reflective teaching" references may be very useful as well.

Secondary Teacher's Handbook

LYNN OVERALL & MARGARET SANGSTER

Continuum Press, London (2003)

ISBN 0-8264-5841-6

Secondary Teacher's Handbook is an important resource for the continued improvement of the practice of secondary education. Whether you are at pre qualification level or a seasoned member of the teaching profession, this is a useful guide and reference. Presented in an A-Z format this book covers the issues that concern teachers on a day-to-day basis. It is particularly well suited to today's learning milieu where teachers face multiple and often competing demands. Not

intended as a definitive text, this slim volume presents a compendium of clearly written information that is of practical use. Accessible and easy to use, this unique book offers intelligence likely to add to the repertoire of skills necessary for effective teaching. It is relevant to the UK and the international audience.

Intended as a practical support to developing teaching strategies this book is organized in two parts. The first provides a step-by-step guide to the process of self-evaluation. Overall and Sangster offer a practical format to support this process that consists of a table of headings. The headings include; *The aspect of teaching I wish to improve; strategy to try; evaluation; and, success/try another strategy*. Use of the table is illustrated through vignettes taken from an aspect of teaching outlined in part two. The entries may be used as reference material though their real strength is as a problem-solving tool.

Commensurate with the ability to problem solve is problem identification. This relies on the teacher's capacity for "reflexivity" through the assimilation of complex educational issues in an equally complex learning milieu. Regrettably, this receives scarce attention and is understated, the text predicated on the ability of the teachers to reflect critically upon their professional practice. This aspect receives passing mention in the form of a footnote. That when teaching strategies fail, the teacher is advised to "*Be selective, consult a colleague who will be prepared and able to assist your thinking*". The reader might have welcomed references to the literature on Reflective Practice, not least Pollard (2002) *Reflective Teaching and Readings for Reflective Teachers* (2002) both issued by the same publisher. Opportunity to include such material possibly presents itself in part two, under Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Its inclusion may have served to underscore this critical aspect and further guide the reader. This is the only limitation of this book.

Presented alphabetically part two covers over 80 issues that teachers face on an everyday basis, beginning with "able students" through to "working with other adults". The central issues concerning each topic are succinctly summarized together with bullet pointed strategies for targeted improvement. This is followed by a useful section on further development. Equally useful is a list of further reading that is current and includes web-based resources ranging from official documentation to curriculum online publications. Noteworthy is the inclusion of the Teacher Training Agency Standard(s) (TTA) pertinent to each topic area, and possibly highlights the guiding principles of this volume located within the broader policy and procedural context. This element is likely to be of particular interest to those in the UK involved in teacher training.

Intelligently designed the juxtaposition and interplay of the various components of this book make for engaging reading that is educationally sound. In my judgement the authors have produced a very useful book for working on becoming a more effective teacher through a process of evaluation and action and thereby achieved their overall aim.

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