Personal Nursing Education Philosophy

Individual philosophy is a blend of values (trust), beliefs (fairness), and cultural contexts (sensitivity). Before entering the classroom, the instructor must review his/her own values surrounding education, communication, individuality, and diversity. The teacher must value the student’s primary role in the education process. The instructor also must think completely through presentation of subject matter and the effect that might be garnered on the individuality and diversity of the student population. Nursing education in the millennium will be learner-centered. According to Cravener (1997), “Goals for nursing education that will prepare our students for changing social and healthcare systems include developing initiative, ability to work well in collaborative groups, reasoning, planning, and multicultural skills.” To pursue these goals for nursing education into the 21st century, the author has based personal nursing education philosophy on four basic principles: awareness, intellectual creativity, perseverance, and active learning. Theoretical guides enmeshed with the four ideologies were a blend of reconstructivism, progressivism and Watson’s theory of caring.

Awareness

To facilitate the learning process, the instructor and student must be aware of each other at all times. Each participant must remain attentive, involved, respectful, and actively engaged while listening and exchanging ideas. Awareness can be accomplished through interaction and establishment of a trusting environment. When creating awareness, Commanday (1994) stated, “To hear you, they must be aware of you. If you want students to acknowledge your words to
them, they must sense respect from you. Be there—all there.” An educator gains trust through interaction, not dictation. The instructor must be available and open to all lines of communication within the learning environment. Open communication is paramount to creating a safe haven for the student to learn. The idea of communication goes beyond convenient office hours. Communication with today’s adult learner is accomplished in informal and formal context. Classroom in a learning-centered environment should consist of a constant exchange of ideas between student and teacher. Communication, verbal and non-verbal, should be completely open, with the instructor willing to learn from the student.

**Intellectual Creativity**

The author believes the instructor must be willing to relinquish some control of the classroom and allow the adult learner in a professional degree program the ability to experience self-directed learning. In theory, Sparling (2001, p. 203) defined self-directed learning as:

> A learner initiated process. It involves diagnosis of learning needs, formulation of objectives, selection of resources, implementation of strategies, and evaluation of learning outcomes. Self-directed learning may involve much interaction with resources, colleagues, and facilitators, rather than learning in isolation, as the term self-directed would imply. Self-directed learning is founded on the belief that optimal learning occurs when the teacher acts as a facilitator, or resource person, rather than as content expert. The facilitator provides direction by giving the learner choices among several alternatives.

The student assists in the definition of the professor’s role within a self directed learning environment. The instructor provides choices and the student provides individual direction. From this author’s frame of reference, intellectual creativity is grounded in the educational
philosophies, reconstructivism and progressivism. The instructor facilitates learning without tests and assignments as the main focus and allows the student to freedom and trust to create thoughts. (Keating, 2005)

**Perseverance**

Build a sound reputation as an instructor that cares and does not give up on the student. Be the teacher that works hard to remember, follow up, and recognize all contributions to the learning environment. The student must trust the instructor to not leave them behind. In a learning-centered environment, even though not every student can become a nurse, every student can succeed. Success is determined by the student and the instructor through establishment of mutually inclusive goals. As a teacher, if the author has examined and affirmed values and beliefs and remained open and honest with communication, then actions will dictate that no student will be left behind. This belief of caring openly for student success and learning was driven by Watson’s theory of caring. The crux of Watson’s theory was based in “human experience and caring needs” which should exists as a symbiosis between educator and student. Neither can grow and prosper without the other (Smith, 2004, p. 14).

**Learner-Centered**

Cravener (1997) described learner-centered as, “The development of knowledge, as opposed to acquiring information, ideology, or belief, must not only have meaning but it must be verifiable…Through the rational process of reflection and discourse we assess the validity of our ideas.” To create a learner-centered environment, an instructor must build knowledge around real life situations and interaction with students. The classroom becomes a continuum of assessment, interaction, universal responsibility, problem solving, teamwork, evaluation, and reflection. The classroom of the future is not a one-way delivery system with information simply
presented and then periodically tested. In the future, the instructor steps outside the box and allows student control of learning with continual assessment, feedback, and reflection of the learning process. In other words, the teacher allows student autonomy through, “independence in learning, supported by an egalitarian teacher-learner relationship.” (Cravener, 1997)

Finally, the author’s foundation for a teaching philosophy is derived from a self-devised educational model of metaconceptual awareness (Figure 1). In the author’s system of metaconceptual awareness, the person chooses their level of motivation based on an open-ended perception of environment, values, socioeconomics, community, gender, transcultural influence, individual needs, and style of learning, knowledge base, and judgment ability. A teaching philosophy must be well grounded in values, yet flexible with the future. Student achievement of metaconceptual awareness is the future of learning. When human consciousness and unconsciousness combine with awareness in a dynamic, open system, only then can human science move forward.
References


Figure 1

Metaconceptual Awareness

Person

Learning

Knowledge

Cognition

judgment

Critical Thinking

Decision

Tacit
Explicit
Intellectual
Artistic
Intuitive
Technological

Ability
Style
Individual
Professional
Concrete
Abstract

Information Based,
Work Based,
Experiential Based,
Relationship Based,
Action Based,
Transformational Based

Independence
Motivation
Needs
Student
Instructor
Dialogue
Objectives
Responsibility
Trust

Transcultural
Gender
Socioeconomics

Community
Teaching
Focus
Curriculum

Environment

Values

Figure 1