How Accelerated Nursing Students Learn

A Comparative Case Study of the Facilitators, Barriers, Learning Strategies, Challenges and Obstacles of students in an Accelerated Nursing Program
Background and Context

• Adult Learning: an adult learner is described as someone who:
  - Has an Independent concept and can direct their own learning.
  - Has accumulated a reservoir of life experience that is a rich resource for learning.
  - Has learning needs closely related to changing social roles.
Background and Context

- Is problem – centered and interested in immediate application/
- MOTIVATED to Learn
Adult Education
- The term accelerated learning is usually associated with programs designed to meet the needs of adult learners.
- Because of family, work and other commitments many adults cannot participate in traditional programs.
- The first accelerated nursing program in the U.S. was a one year program offered by Saint Louis University in 1971. Since then over 150 programs have been developed or in the planning phase.
Nursing Shortage

• Advances in biomedical sciences
• Financial constraints
• Restructuring of healthcare
• Reduced the nursing workforce
Trends in Nursing

• Declining interest
• New career opportunities
• Decrease in high school graduates as compared with “Baby Boomer” graduates
• Nursing Salaries

Buerhaus, 2005
Problem Statement

• The nurse of today must be able to think, solve problems, organize care, set priorities, communicate effectively, and know how to learn.

• Despite the popularity and promise of these programs, providing an educational experience that is flexible and comprehensive is challenging for both student and faculty.
Problem Statement

• As educators we know little about how accelerated nursing students learn.
• Therefore, the problem to be addressed in this inquiry is the lack of knowledge regarding the learning needs and experiences of students in an accelerated program, in particular the strategies used to enable them to learn the skills required to practice nursing.
Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe how students in an accelerated nursing program learn. The goal of this study was to identify:

• The facilitators and barriers to learning
• The learning strategies students rely on and find valuable in learning to become nurses
• Explore how what they learned enabled them to overcome the challenges encountered in practice
Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What personal factors did students enrolled in accelerated nursing programs identify as facilitators and barriers to learning?

2. What past academic and professional factors did students enrolled in an accelerated program identify as facilitators and barriers to learning?
Research Questions

3. What kinds of learning skills and strategies did students rely on and found valuable to learning the knowledge needed to become nurses.

4. What did students learn that enabled them to overcome the challenges or obstacles encountered in practice
Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Four areas of literature were reviewed to address these questions. These areas have been categorized as:
- Accelerated learning theory and practice
- Experiential learning and reflection
- Self – directed learning
- Social Cognitive Theory and Self efficacy. These areas were also used to develop the conceptual framework for this study
Methodology

• This qualitative inquiry employed a descriptive case study design.

• A descriptive case study in education is one that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under study.

• A case study approach was chosen because, it will enable the researcher to get beneath the surface, offering opportunities for reflection and in – depth analysis from multiple perspectives within a bounded system (Creswell, 1998).

• This researcher believes that a case study from an accelerated nursing program will help educators understand how accelerated nursing student learn the knowledge and skills required to engage in professional nursing practice.
Setting and Participants

• This study was conducted at State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center, College of Nursing.

• In this setting, students have the opportunity to pursue programs of study at the undergraduate or graduate level.

• At present there are two programs that lead to a baccalaureate degree, the RN- BSN completion program and the Accelerated Nursing Program.
Setting and Participants

• During this study 21 participants (6 for the focus group interview and 15 for individual interviews) was selected from a total population of 148 students.

• A purposive sampling technique will be utilized in selecting the most appropriate participants for this study.
Setting and Participants

The criteria for inclusion in this study was:

- Age
- Gender,
- Ethnicity,
- Success or failure in course completion,
- The availability and willingness to share their views regarding their past higher educational experiences as compared to the kinds of learning they find valuable to acquiring essential nursing skills at present.
- These criteria will help the researcher form comparisons regarding the types of learning strategies used by various age groups: the difference in the strategies used by male and female students: learning among different ethnic groups: why certain strategies were successful or unsuccessful in meeting the goals of the program and how past educational experience differ from present experiences in terms of the type and effectiveness of learning strategies in either facilitating or impeding course progression.
Ethical Concerns

- Participants in this study were asked to volunteer after the purposes, risks, and benefits of the study are explained.
- Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time.
- Written informed consent were obtained.
- Field notes and transcripts were coded to maintain confidentiality of the participants. All records will be destroyed following the study.
- Approval for this study was granted by the Institutional Review Boards of Downstate Medical Center and Teacher’s College Columbia University
Findings and Conclusions

Motivation

- Career Change
- Job Stability
- Job Flexibility
- Career advancement
- Always wanted to be a Nurse
- Life long learner
## Findings and Conclusions

### Learning Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitators</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Family</td>
<td>- Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Peers</td>
<td>- Peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Clinical instructors/preceptors</td>
<td>- Clinical instructors/preceptors</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Motivation</td>
<td>- Communication</td>
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Findings and Conclusion
Curriculum Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitators</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Flexibility</td>
<td>- Number of assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Internship</td>
<td>- STRESS</td>
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Findings and Conclusions: Teaching Methods

**Facilitators**
- Course organization
- Experience teaching accelerated students
- Subject matter expertise

**Barriers**
- Course organization
- Experience teaching accelerated students
- Subject matter expertise
Findings and Conclusions
Learning ability

- Facilitators
  - Previous academic success
  - Study Habits

- Barriers
  - Previous learning standards
Findings and Conclusions
Experiential Learning

- Observation, Demonstration and Return Demonstration

- Direct Clinical Experiences and Hands on Practice

- Case Study
Findings and Conclusions
Self- Directed Learning

• Self- selected clinical and classroom learning opportunities

• Self- selected readings

• Independent Study Projects
Findings and Conclusions
Social Cognitive Theory

• Perceived Learning ability

• Observational Learning

• Role Modeling The behavior of other nurses
Findings and Conclusions
Challenges and Obstacles

• RN Graduates:

  - Difficulty mastering new skills
  - Overcoming stressful learning situations
Recommendations

Deans and Program Directors

- Reexamine the curriculum
- Develop and Intensive Orientation Program
- Continue Accelerated Program Forums
Recommendations

Faculty, Clinical Instructors and Preceptors
- Provide students with a review of course, assignments and examination plans
- Provide clear learning objectives
- Explore innovative methods for delivering content
* Teaching as we were taught may not be effective
Recommendations

Collaborative Partners
- Consider a Preceptor Educational Program
- Continue Internship Program
Accelerated Nursing Students

Find A Mentor
Future Research

Repeat research with a larger sample that includes the faculty’s perception of teaching in an accelerated Nursing Program.
Recommendations

• Accelerated Nursing Students
Further Research