Safeguarding the Practices of Nursing:
The Lived Experience of being-as Preceptor to Undergraduate
Student Nurses in Acute Care Settings

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Abstract

An Heideggerian Hermeneutic approach has been adopted to explore the experience of being-as preceptor to undergraduate student nurses in the acute care setting. This thesis addresses the question: What is the experience of being a preceptor to undergraduate student nurses in an acute care setting? Fifteen preceptor-participants were interviewed twice, with each interview being approximately one hour. Heideggerian Hermeneutical Analysis was used to reveal the experience of preceptors as they precept undergraduate student nurses.

The thesis begins by placing nursing education in an historical, socio-political and professional context that provides the background to current New Zealand nursing practice. Student nurses undergoing their nursing education learn the meaning of being a nurse in many different contexts. This research is situated in the acute care context where both preceptors and student nurses engage in the practice of nursing. The methodological background shapes the way the research is presented to explicate the meaning of being-as preceptor. The four data chapters reveal the preceptors' experience and open with dialogue showing how nurses become preceptors. This is followed by exploration of how preceptors assessed where the student was at, moves to preceptors promoting learning and closes with discussion of how preceptors keep students and patients safe. Many practices were uncovered during the revelations of the preceptors as they disclosed to the researcher narratives of their everyday practice world.

Common themes that emerge from the data include: Becoming attuned – the call, The Emerging Identity of 'being-as' Preceptor: Keeping the student in mind, Assessing where the student is at: The Preceptor and Preceptee Working and Growing Together, and The Preceptor as Builder of Nursing Practice: Teaching Reality Nursing. A number of common themes support the relational themes which are of greater complexity. A constitutive pattern, the highest form of interpretation that emerges from the data, was Safeguarding the Practices of Nursing. This constitutive pattern lies within every text either directly or is inferred from each participant's dialogue. It contains the central meaning of the thesis. It is constituted from common and relational themes as they present themselves in the analytical process.

In this thesis the experience of being-as preceptor is unveiled through the participants' own words as the researcher takes the reader back to the 'things themselves' as is espoused by hermeneutic phenomenology.
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...Not to have arrived, but to have made the journey...

To have completed this thesis feels like I have run a marathon. I have never run a marathon but I feel some empathy for those who do. This doctoral thesis has been a challenging, frustrating, enjoyable, woeful and at times despairing journey for me. Not only for me but also, for those whom I hold most dear. However, I have not travelled alone. I have had many travelling companions who have sustained me throughout the journey.

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