

ADRIANNE E. AVILLION, DED, RN

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Professional Growth in Staff Development

STRATEGIES FOR NEW AND EXPERIENCED EDUCATORS



Professional Growth in Staff Development

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Adrianne E. Avillion, DEd, RN

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Professional Growth in Staff Development: Strategies for New and Experienced Educators is published by HCPro, Inc.

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ISBN: 978-1-60146-818-5

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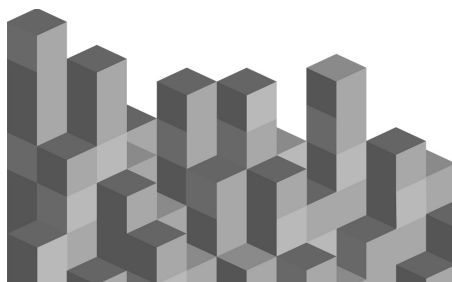
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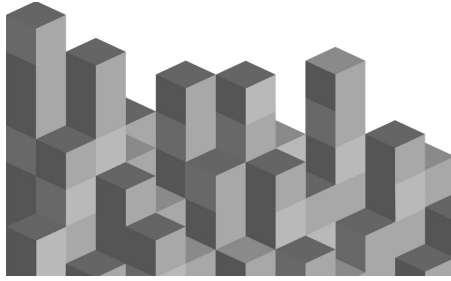
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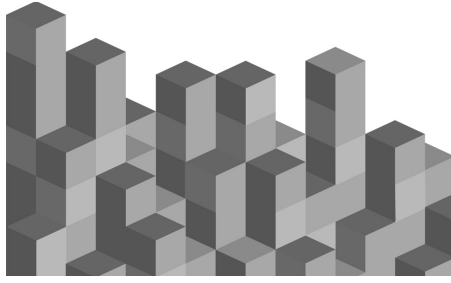
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She is a frequent presenter at conferences and conventions devoted to the specialty of continuing education and staff development.



Introduction

Staff development specialists have become the “go to” source whenever a need arises within healthcare organizations. Whether it’s for a job performance issue, a knowledge gap, the achievement of accreditation, or the initiation of a new process or system, staff development is counted on to help lead the way to success.

We orient new employees with the assumption that we will help to make them valuable employees for the organization. When evidence-based clinical practice crossed from being merely a theoretical concept to becoming an expected clinical and patient safety necessity, staff development specialists educated staff, helped to implement the process, and nurtured clinical staff to provide care based on evidence and learn how to evaluate outcomes based on objective data.

Staff development specialists are expected to nurture the professional growth and development of nurses and, often, all the organization’s employees. We contribute to recruitment and retention activities, promote clinical advancement programs, and chair or serve on committees essential to organizational effectiveness.

Unfortunately, despite all the time and effort we put into these activities, we seldom devote similar time and effort to the advancement of our own specialty. Do we have established orientation and preceptor programs for staff development specialists? Do we conduct our practice based on evidence and an established theoretical framework? Do we mentor our staff development colleagues? Do we nurture our professional growth and development via established career advancement pathways?

Sadly, the answer to these and similar pertinent questions is often “no.” We may cite lack of time and resources as major barriers to developing these programs, but we do them for the rest of the

Introduction

organization, particularly the department of nursing. How can we not devote the same kind of time and effort to our own colleagues and to the advancement of our own specialty?

This book provides a theoretical model for the promotion of staff development. Designed to serve as the first resource that addresses the professional growth and development needs of staff development specialists, it offers practical strategies and tools for the establishment of recruitment and retention programs, continuing education, and career advancement specific to our specialty.

It is my hope that this publication will add to the body of knowledge that is staff development and contribute to the advancement of the specialty.

Adrianne E. Avillion, DEd, RN
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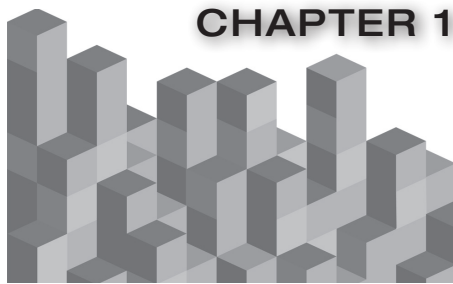
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CHAPTER 1

Adapting Benner's Levels of Expertise to Staff Development

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, the participant will be able to:

- Identify characteristics of the novice staff development practitioner
- Describe the behaviors of the advanced beginner staff development practitioner
- Determine what constitutes a competent staff development practitioner
- Evaluate the job performance of a proficient staff development practitioner
- Determine the behaviors of an expert staff development practitioner

Introduction

Theoretical models of clinical nursing practice have been under study for many decades. In clinical practice, these models have often served as the basis for nursing practice within particular healthcare organizations as well as the foundation for clinical advancement programs. Those who work in staff development, whether they are called staff development specialists or nursing professional development (NPD) specialists, have been instrumental in helping nursing colleagues (and other healthcare professional colleagues) to grow and advance in their practice.

To date, however, little attention has been paid to developing a formal practice model for staff development, nor have there been concentrated efforts to develop career advancement “ladders” for NPD specialists. The content of this chapter focuses on adapting Benner's (1984) levels of clinical nursing practice to the practice of staff development. This chapter presents an overview of proposed levels of staff development practice (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1

Overview of staff development levels

Level	Experience	Education and training in staff development	Continuing education opportunities	Career advancement opportunities
Novice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None • Shows an interest in and aptitude for educating others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional journals • Books • Learning activities • (All focused on the educator role) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preceptors • Assisting with just-in-time training • Assisting with in-service education
Advanced beginner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealt with enough “real life” situations to identify important components of a learning activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSN in nursing or related field • Received some training in relation to unit-based role and should be required to earn continuing education in the staff development field to advance in the specialty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to those of the novice, should be encouraged to pursue graduate education as well as earn a specific number of contact hours in the staff development field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate pursuit of graduate education • Involve them in gathering evidence and begin to teach basics of data evaluation • Facilitate transition into nursing professional development (NPD) role
Competent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been in the same job or worked in similar situations for two to three years • Can independently carry out basic needs assessment and plan and implement programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possesses graduate degree in nursing or related field; if graduate degree is in a related field, must possess a baccalaureate degree in nursing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue leadership learning activities • Pursue learning activities related to research, evidence-based practice (EBP), and correlating evidence to positive changes in job performance and patient outcomes • Earn professional development certification • Join professional associations focused on staff development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link with mentors • Facilitate participation in staff development research; staff development EBP, committee chairpersonships • Pursue publishing and presenting opportunities

Adapting Benner's Levels of Expertise to Staff Development

Figure 1.1

Overview of staff development levels (cont.)

Level	Experience	Education and training in staff development	Continuing education opportunities	Career advancement opportunities
Proficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general minimum of 5 years of experience • Perceives situations as a whole rather than components • Serves as mentor • Assumes committee chairpersonship • Automatically performs in a staff development EBP manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification in NPD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursuit of additional graduate-level courses in staff development • Pursuit of learning activities that will help them to initiate staff development research • Is active in professional associations focused on staff development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully function as mentor • Assume more responsibility for leadership, budget process, recruitment and retention of NPD specialists, and long-range planning • Publishing and presenting are expected
Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of about 10 years of experience in the specialty • Functions on an intuitive, instinctive level and is able to quickly grasp the essentials of any staff development situation • Often functions as manager of staff development or research departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possesses doctorate degree in nursing, adult education, or related field or is in pursuit of such a degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on administrative and managerial education • Seek to increase knowledge of research to conduct and guide staff development research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and oversee mentor programs • Pursue the manager role in staff development or research • Pursue leadership roles in professional associations focused on staff development • Assume leadership roles in promoting staff development research

Chapter 1

Benner's (1984) work was instrumental in identifying some of the characteristics of each level. Details, along with suggested competencies for each level, are found in subsequent chapters.

The Novice

According to Benner (1984), the novice has no experience of the situations pertaining to a given role. In order to facilitate entry to desired roles, it is necessary to provide rules that guide the behaviors of novices. Novices think in terms of objective elements that can be objectively measured. For novices in clinical practice, such elements might include administering medications accurately or auscultating a patient's lungs. They follow rules rigidly and cannot adapt to situations that do not fit within the context of defined rules and guidelines.

How can these parameters of the novice clinical practitioner be applied to staff development practice? Novices in staff development have no experience, training, or formal education in the staff development field. They may be experienced clinical practitioners, but novices in staff development.

Novices are those staff nurses or other healthcare professionals who demonstrate an interest in the education process and an aptitude for teaching others. They may excel at patient education and/or are known for helping colleagues to acquire new psychomotor skills. Novices pursue continuing education enthusiastically and get the attention of NPD specialists because of their potential to become staff development experts.

Novices have no training or formal education in staff development or related fields such as continuing education, adult education, or professional development certification. In order to nurture their professional growth and development in the education field, novices should be encouraged to begin pursuit of education and training that will cultivate their ability to become educators. Examples include:

- Reading professional journals devoted to the practice of staff development and continuing education, such as *The Journal for Nurses in Staff Development* and *The Journal for Continuing Education in Nursing*
- Reading books that focus on staff development and continuing education
- Participating in learning activities that focus on enhancing teaching skills

Adapting Benner's Levels of Expertise to Staff Development

Novices should be offered career advancement opportunities not only to provide chances for promotion and/or monetary gain but to allow them to begin acquiring the skills of an educator. Many organizations incorporate some type of teaching responsibilities as part of career advancement programs. Examples of education-focused career opportunities include:

- Serving as preceptors
- Assisting with just-in-time training
- Assisting with in-service education

Novices are objectively identified by their pursuit of learning activities related to the educator role, their quest for career advancement opportunities related to the educator role, and their demonstration of behaviors that show an aptitude for the educator role. Novices are persons who may eventually pursue a career in staff development. The next level of that pursuit is that of advanced beginner.

Advanced Beginner

According to Benner (1984), advanced beginners are able to demonstrate marginally acceptable performance. Advanced beginners in staff development have dealt with enough “real life” situations to identify meaningful components of teaching/learning situations. For example, they know that learning activities must have a specific purpose and objectives and that content must be relevant and accessible to learners.

Advanced beginners are persons who have progressed beyond the novice role and have been able to assume basic responsibilities as a staff development practitioner. They do not function as NPD specialists but may fulfill the role of unit-based educator. Many staff development departments have full- or part-time positions that focus on a specific unit. In these situations, the advanced beginner's role is to implement, under the direction of the NPD specialist, specific unit-based activities such as in-service and just-in-time training. They do not have the education, background, or experience to fill the role of NPD specialist.

Chapter 1

STAFF DEVELOPMENT — ALERT —



Do not make the mistake of equating the advanced beginner role with that of an NPD specialist. Throughout nursing's history we have blurred the lines between some roles (e.g., RN and LPN) so that many healthcare professionals do not recognize that there is a difference. The advanced beginner can play an important part in the education activities of a healthcare organization, but is not an NPD specialist.

Advanced beginners need to take advantage of continuing education as much as possible to prepare for the role of NPD specialist. In addition to continuing to pursue self-study (e.g., reading professional journals and books focusing on staff development) and participating in staff development learning activities, they need to formulate a plan for completing a master's degree.

An advanced beginner's logical career advancement path is the pursuit of an NPD role. This involves earning a master's degree and avidly seeking out continuing education activities in staff development.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT — ALERT —



It is important to pay attention to the retention of advanced beginners as they acquire the education and skills necessary for the assumption of the NPD role. Be sure to publicly recognize their contributions to staff development and the organization. They should be included in staff development department staff meetings and involved in the process of gathering data/evidence to document the impact of education on job performance, patient outcomes, and organizational effectiveness. Begin to teach them the elements of data evaluation.

Even if advanced beginners are not interested in pursuing a NPD role, be sure to do everything you can to retain them since these kinds of positions may be of significant value to your department.

Competent

Competence in staff development (similar to Benner's clinical model) occurs when actions are seen in terms of long-range goals and plans. Competents are NPD specialists who have been in the same job or worked in similar situations for two to three years. They possess the formal education identified by

Adapting Benner's Levels of Expertise to Staff Development

the American Nurses Association (ANA)/National Nursing Staff Development Organization (NNSDO) (2010, p. 12) *Nursing Professional Development Scope & Standards of Practice*:

“The NPD specialist is a licensed registered nurse with a graduate degree. If the graduate degree is in a related discipline, then the baccalaureate degree must be in nursing. Nurses working in nursing professional development are expected to demonstrate ongoing development of nursing professional development knowledge through continuing education, academic progression, and other professional development activities.”

Competents are able to independently carry out basic needs assessments and plan and implement programs. They need assistance to evaluate program data and translate such data into staff development evidence-based practice (EBP). Competents are valuable committee members, but may need help translating committee data into useful staff development evidence. They are not yet ready to assume the chairpersonship of committees.

Competents do not have the speed or flexibility of the proficient NPD specialist. They still look at the “parts” of education rather than seeing situations as a whole. For example, competents are still likely to overreact to a few negative program evaluations rather than perform a complete analysis of available data and other types of evidence.

Continuing education should focus on enhancing leadership skills, EBP in staff development, and research. Earning professional development certification is encouraged. Competents should join professional associations focusing on staff development.

Competents' career advancement focuses on enhancing research, analysis, and leadership skills as well as looking at the “big picture” rather than its component parts. Studying for specialty certification helps in these areas; so does linking the competent with a mentor. Mentorship is very important at this stage. Competents may begin to feel overwhelmed with the realization that they need to move beyond the technical skills of program planning and implementation. They need support and guidance from others who have made the successful transition from competent to proficient.

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Competents need help implementing staff development EBP. The next step in the career ladder involves demonstrating the ability to translate evidence into education impact statements. They should also be groomed to assume committee chairperson roles. Other career advancement options include publishing and/or presenting at conferences and/or conventions focusing on staff development.

Proficient

Proficients perceive education situations as wholes rather than individual components. They look at the big picture and make decisions based on evidence and past experience. Proficients can adapt swiftly and respond appropriately to unexpected situations, but still occasionally rely on rules or guidelines.

Proficients think, speak, and react in terms of evidence and are able to implement staff development EBP with minimal difficulty. They are expected to chair committees that focus on education and training.

Proficients are usually certified in NPD and should be encouraged to pursue additional graduate courses that may lead to a doctoral degree. Publishing and presenting at staff development conferences and/or conventions is expected. Continuing education focuses on learning to implement staff development research projects and further developing leadership and administrative skills. Expanding knowledge of the budget process, recruitment and retention efforts, and long-range planning is important.

Career advancement focuses on the assumption of expanded leadership responsibilities, including helping less experienced colleagues to understand and implement staff development EBP. Proficients should assume the mentor roles for less experienced colleagues. Proficients should be active members of professional associations focused on staff development.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT — ALERT —

Proficients may be difficult to retain. They have significant experience in the routine day-to-day operations of staff development and need support, encouragement, and the awareness that they have significant career advancement opportunities.

Adapting Benner's Levels of Expertise to Staff Development

Expert

The expert no longer needs rules or guidelines to analyze and react to staff development situations. They function on an intuitive, instinctive level and are able to quickly grasp the essentials of any staff development situation. Experts usually have a minimum of 10 years of experience in the specialty. They often possess or are actively pursuing a doctorate in nursing, adult education, or a related field. Experts often function in a managerial capacity, directing staff development or research operations.

Experts feel that they have “seen and done it all” in staff development and are prone to burnout. Their continuing education focuses on administrative and management programs and increasing their ability to conduct staff development research.

Career advancement opportunities include developing and implementing mentor programs, pursuing positions at the managerial or administrative levels (in staff development or research), and pursuing leadership roles in professional associations focused on staff development. Experts are leaders in promoting staff development research and adding to the unique body of knowledge that is staff development.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT — ALERT —

The characteristics of the various levels of staff development are based on the author's own experience in the specialty rather than empirical research. However, such research is in progress.

Chapter 1

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