

CNE Competency VI: Pursue Continuous Quality Improvement in the Nurse Educator Role (see the NLN Website <http://www.nln.org/professional-development-programs/competencies-for-nursing-education/nurse-educator-core-competency>)

The Organization for Associate Degree Nursing (OADN) values the role of the nurse educator. Being an effective educator can impact students and their patients for decades. It is for this reason that this organization promotes professional certification as an educator. Obtaining the National League for Nursing (NLN) certification as a Certified Nurse Educator (CNE) denotes your dedication to excellence in practice as a nurse educator. The Education and Research Committee has and will continue to post each of the Competencies as identified in the 2017 Detailed Test Blueprint for the CNE Examination on the OADN website. These posts are brief summaries of where to focus your study for the competency with some tips for practical application in your role as a nurse educator.

This brief will focus on competency VI, Pursue Continuous Quality Improvement in the Nurse Educator Role.

The CNE 2017 Candidate Handbook provides an in-depth explanation of certification and the test blueprint. The handbook can be downloaded at <http://www.nln.org/professional-development-programs/Certification-for-Nurse-Educators/handbook>. Using the handbook, faculty will learn about the 150 item exam, the purpose of the exam, and how to qualify to take the exam.

CNE Competency VI

This content area ***Pursue Continuous Quality Improvement in the Nurse Educator Role***, accounts for 9% of the exam. This content area focuses on socialization as an educator in a nursing program, the college, and the professional community. Learning the various role expectations and balancing these roles effectively is rewarding but can also be challenging. Socialization as a nurse educator is an ongoing process and based on role theory. Role theory has its roots in sociology, with expectations and norms predetermined within the professional or social role (Bonnell, 2015). Role socialization for the nurse educator can be enhanced by clarity of the role, ongoing commitment to develop, and maintenance of competency in the role. The National League for Nursing offers a Healthful Work Environment (HWE) Toolkit at <http://nln.org/professional-development-programs/teaching-resources/toolkits/healthful-work-environment> (NLN, 2017). The HWE Toolkit includes resources and assessment questions that can be used by a new faculty member to obtain role clarity in the education setting. When an educator does not take the time to get to know the culture or is not supported in the role it can lead to role conflict or incompatibility, role ambiguity, role stress or role strain. Numerous educators transition from a clinical role to a faculty role and are used to serving as clinical mentors in practice. Many academic settings provide a new educator with orientation, a department mentor, and also a college mentor. The most successful new educators play an active role by observing, participating, and learning. Balancing the requirements of the nurse educator role includes learning how to function within the academic setting along with skills related to didactic and clinical teaching (Oermann, 2015).

Life-long learning for educators can be enhanced by membership in professional organizations. Membership in OADN provides an opportunity for continuous quality improvement in the practice and

Of nursing education. For example, OADN provides many opportunities for nurse educators to be involved on committees and to take on leadership roles within the committees. In addition to committee membership, members may volunteer for candidacy to serve on the OADN Board of Directors. Being involved on committees not only allows for networking and information exchange but also helps to address the work of the profession, and allow for professional growth and satisfaction.

The health care environment changes rapidly and staying current is an essential element of being successful as an educator. The theory of Constructivism (Bonnell, 2015) fits with the needs and roles in nursing education through reflective self-assessment, self-directed learning, and mapping. Reflective self-assessment allows the new faculty member to assess their strengths and areas of improvement. A nurse educator needs to be cognizant about skills necessary to stay up-to-date in an evolving health care setting. Knowing when to seek out learning opportunities is crucial in self-directed learning. Having a career plan provides a map for professional growth and ongoing career development.

An effective nurse educator uses formal and informal approaches to strategically promote one's career. Professional development opportunities within and outside of nursing are beneficial. Most importantly, reflecting on personal philosophy, setting goals, and planning development activities enhance faculty motivation and facilitate quality improvement. A formal approach can involve pursuing a terminal degree, such as a PhD or DNP, obtaining certification in a specialty area of interest, or attending conferences in nursing and teaching. An informal approach can include staying current with journals both in nursing and education, presenting research at a conference, or publishing.

Institutional requirements regarding teaching, service, and scholarship vary greatly for each faculty member. It is essential for the nurse educator to learn the unique organization requirements to balance time and making sure the role expectations are met. Working with a department and/or college mentor can be beneficial as a mentor can direct what the priority is at the institution. Mentors are invaluable as a nurse educator enters academia. An effective mentor-mentee relationship will assist in helping the nurse educator understand the unique academic culture, provide support, give a sense of belonging, and assist with balancing the multiple requirements for the job; teaching, service and scholarship expectations.

Teaching. If the nurse educator would like to improve in the area of curriculum or teaching strategies it would be beneficial to be part of the department curriculum committee. If the nurse educator would like to learn more about program assessment and evaluation being part of the evaluation committee may assist in growth in this area.

Service. Service in most organizations is comprised of service to the department, college, and community. Role consolidation in which a nurse educator combines service roles maximizes faculty workload by balancing work within groups, work towards self-development and balancing self-care. It is essential for the nurse educator to learn the unique organization service requirements to balance time and making sure the service expectations are met.

Scholarship. Participating in scholarship is expected at all levels of nursing education and goes beyond traditional research. Boyer's framework provides direction on how to best approach scholarly work

related to teaching, application, integration, and discovery. It will take time to balance all requirements and to be effective without feeling overwhelmed. When done with a plan and guided by supportive colleagues, in and outside the department, over time the nurse educator will be able to build a great portfolio showcasing the accomplishments and contributing to the profession. Additional scholarship information will be provided in Competency VII.

As the academic nurse educator advances in the profession feedback is essential to improve role effectiveness. Not only should feedback be received, it needs to be processed. Through reflection, a nurse educator can construct self-knowledge and set further goals to continuously improve. A common approach at most institutions is to ask for student feedback on teaching in the classroom and clinical settings at the end of each semester. However, intermittent feedback from students throughout the semester can be obtained to see what is working, what needs improvement in teaching or the course before the end of the semester. Both methods combined, intermittent feedback and end of course evaluations provide quality improvement opportunities and can also be used in a nurse educator annual performance evaluation. Constructive peer and administrator feedback along with a self-assessment utilizing a standardized rubric add to the evaluation process to improve teaching techniques and can also be incorporated in annual performance reviews. Triangulation of feedback, student, peer and administrator, allows the nurse educator to gain insight through the use of multiple methods, approaches and evaluators.

As a nurse educator it is critical to consider the legal and ethical standards relevant to higher education and nursing. First and foremost a nurse educator needs to be proactive in knowing the ethical principles that impact higher education such as faculty guidelines, students' rights and responsibilities, academic integrity policies, and the guidelines presented in the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA). The best approach is to periodically review these policies to ensure that students understand them in an attempt to prevent problems later.

Common academic nurse educator challenges at institutions center around fair and equitable treatment. Having clear grading policies for classroom, skill check offs in college lab, and standard evaluations for clinical student performance will ensure consistent application of grading by all nurse educators. Promoting academic integrity can be accomplished by proactive strategies including clear and objective student policies, creating a safe environment for students, defining problem behaviors with appropriate responses, and making sure the penalty fits the offense. These strategies should be clearly outlined in the Student Handbook. The increasing use of technology by students make it difficult for some to maintain safe, legal and ethical behavior. Social media guidelines, along with dramatization of potential scenarios of inappropriate social media, from the National Council of State Board of Nursing (NCSBN) can be used to educate students on what constitutes professional behavior as students enter a new nursing role. These guidelines can be found at <https://www.ncsbn.org/347.htm>.

In conclusion, there are many essential elements that a nurse educator needs to develop in the pursuit of continuous quality improvement. This brief overview highlighted areas such as socialization to the faculty role, importance of mentorship and involvement in professional organizations as well as developing a balance in teaching, scholarship and service. Additional reading and studying on this

competency is needed in order to feel confident preparing for this part of the examination. The references provided, give additional direction.

References:

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