How do mentors assess students in practice; do we want to know?

Maggie Bennett Practice Education Facilitator  SHSCT
Brian McGowan Lecturer University of Ulster
The background. Why we need to know?

- NMC Standards to support learning & assessment in practice, (NMC, 2008).

- Reliable assessment depends upon the professional judgement and training of the assessor. (Mc Mullan et al. 2003).

- The assessment of nursing students in practice is under researched (Fitzgerald et al. 2010).

- Research has suggested that many mentors are inexperienced and do not fully comprehend the assessment process. (Mc Carthy and Murphy, 2008)
Aim of the research project

To explore through focus groups Trust Registered Nurse Mentors experience of assessing pre-registration nursing students in practice.

To understand how assessment is actually carried out in practice and the rewards and challenges faced by mentors.

To inform, improve and strengthen future support strategies for new and existing mentors.
Research design

- Qualitative approach, using focus groups.
- Mentors and sign off mentors assigned to separate groups. The design and recruitment to the focus groups was informed by the methodology of Krueger (1994).
- Consistent open ended questions used across all groups.
- Focus groups digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Content analysis carried out by the six stage approach described by Newell and Burnard (2011).
Research sample

- Trust registered mentor database
- Inclusion criteria
- Random selection process
Research Governance

- University of Ulster
- Office for Research Ethics Committees (Northern Ireland)
- Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Emerging themes

- Perceived change in role and need for support
- Assessment of total performance
  - Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes
- External constraints
- The Record of Achievement as an assessment tool?
Perceived change in role and responsibilities

“Do you think the student sees you as their assessor?”

…..Us?
“I think they are seeing us more of late as an assessor rather than just getting through a placement”

“I just started there with a management student and I realised how much onus is actually on me as mentor..”

“...for the sign off now that role has completely changed.”

“..on our ward a lot of the mentors don’t want to be the sign off mentors because they don’t want the responsibility..... But there is not much difference ..because you still need to be truthful at that stage.”

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Assessment of Knowledge, Skills and Attitude

“she was really interested” “quite enthusiastic”

“I think you know if they are interested, if they ask you about things”

“...if you really, really thought about it, it probably really is subjective and you’re probably are without realising, quite influenced on how well you click with that person and whether you feel their heart is in it.”

“There is a problem if they are a bit stand off-ish”

“You keep trying to talk and explain things but they just don’t want to know really”.
External constraints

- Prior placements
  “if previous placements haven’t been acute placements, you are working your way back, finding things that you think they really should have achieved at this stage” (FGD)

- Length of placement
  “it is really hard when you get a week to do one ..and then you have to sign the book to say that they have done really well, but how can you do really well in everything when it takes a new staff nurse six months to settle in.” (FG3)

  “when you see people for a short period of time, you give them the benefit of the doubt.”

- Time
  “your doing it on the hoof”
The Record of Achievement as an assessment tool?

“I don’t think there was enough emphasis put on mentors before, including myself, as to what the book means…”

“What I would go to most is what the previous mentors had written..”

“I understand that the record of achievement, at the end of the day is the only thing that shows you what they were like, in previous placements.”

“You can write something and write nothing that’s the problem.”
Implications for future support? Do we want to know??
References


Thank you for listening