

THE PROCESS OF MEANINGFUL EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN THE PROFESSIONAL SOCIALIZATION OF SECOND YEAR ATHLETIC TRAINING STUDENTS

Klossner, JC: Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

Objective: Professional socialization is the process of individuals learning the roles of their profession as they become emerging members of the professional culture. Research in education, as well as medical and allied health fields, suggests that clinical education and field experiences may be important to the professional socialization process. There has been little, if any, research on the professional socialization of athletic training students. The purpose of this study was to determine role of clinical experiences in the professional socialization of athletic training students. **Design and Setting:** Modified constructivist grounded theory and case study methodologies served as the primary modes of inquiry for this qualitative study. The case setting was a CAAHEP-accredited athletic training education program at a large Midwest institution. **Subjects:** Twelve second-year students (junior level) were purposively selected. The primary sample group (PSG) was selected following theoretical sampling guidelines ($n = 4$; 3 females, 1 male; 20.75 ± 1.5 years). The remaining students made up the cohort sample group ($n=8$; 5 females, 3 males; 22.86 ± 4.22 years). Fourteen clinical instructors (CI) (10 ATCs, 1 physician, 3 certified graduate students; 7 females, 7 males) participated. Only theoretically relevant data was gathered from CIs to clarifying emergent data from students. **Measurements:** Data collection included document examination, observations and interviews. Document analysis included the review of theoretically relevant curricular materials, CI practicum evaluations, student self-assessments, student clinical experience evaluations and student reflective journals. Each PSG member was observed twice during clinical experiences. Formal (semi-structured), informal, individual and focus group interviews were conducted. Twenty-seven formal interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data was collected and analyzed through constant comparative analysis. Data triangulation, member-checking and peer review strategies were used to ensure trustworthiness. **Results:** The results revealed that the professional socialization of second-year athletic training students was a developmental process in which meaningful experiential learning in the clinical setting was an important determinant of professional socialization. Experiential learning opportunities became meaningful when students gained a sense of self-efficacy from the experiences. This occurred once students reflected upon experiences that involved clinical application of knowledge and skills. **Conclusions:** Clinical experiences allow students to develop a legitimate role within the athletic training community, thus providing increased opportunities for meaningful experiential learning. Under appropriate conditions, experiential learning is an important determinant of professional socialization. Findings are consistent with descriptions of experiential learning in recent athletic training discourse and are also supported by professional socialization literature.

Word Count: 400