Reflections—
On Leaving the JNE Editorship

There are times in the evolution of a journal that assessment and redirection should occur, and change in editorship is just such a time. The Journal of Nursing Education (JNE) began in 1962. I have been its Editor since 1991, and it is now time for a new era for JNE—the oldest journal devoted exclusively to nursing education scholarship—under the guidance of a new Editor.

When I began as Editor, we received approximately 200 manuscripts per year and we published nine issues per year. Now, we receive nearly 600 manuscripts per year, accept fewer than 18% of manuscripts, and publish 12 issues per year. We have seen a continuing rise in database-manuscripts; this is particularly remarkable given that there has not been a parallel increase in funding for nursing education research during this same period.

During the past two decades, we have witnessed the growing recognition of the need for both teacher preparation and for continued development of a scientific basis for our teaching practices. Early in my editorship, I recounted an argument I had with a valued colleague about whether we should include teacher preparation as part of our doctoral program (Tanner, 1997). I noted:

There are a “bajillion” arguments for why it should, of course: the likelihood that many graduates of our doctoral programs will assume academic positions, not in research institutions, but in those which emphasize teaching; the increasing public demand for, and emphasis on excellence in teaching, even in research institutions; new knowledge about human learning which should inform pedagogical practices; and so on. (Tanner, 1997, p. 306)

I continued:

My colleague, however, was not persuaded by any of these arguments. She instead insisted that what makes for good teachers is command of the subject matter; if one knows the ins and outs of the subject to be taught, then one can explain that subject clearly in ways that students can understand. She did not think, however, given limits in our resources, and in the time students could invest in their doctoral education, that priority should be given learning the theory and practice of teaching. (Tanner, 1997, p. 306)

To be sure, there are many who continue to hold the myths, “If you can nurse, you can teach,” or “If you cover it, they will learn it.” However, several significant works recently have changed the landscape of the scholarship of teaching. In 2000, the National Academy of Sciences sponsored an integrative review of the vast body of research on human learning, helping to link the science of learning with pedagogical practices (Bransford et al., 2000). In 2004, Bain’s study What the Best College Teachers Do helped uncover the skill and art form of classroom teaching. Most recently, the Carnegie study of nursing education highlighted signature pedagogies in nursing, such as coaching and case-based teaching, and called for both purposeful teacher preparation and increased research in nursing education (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2009).

The calls for reform in nursing education have been prevalent on the pages within JNE, too. In 1993, we focused an issue on nursing education and health care reform. Citing President Clinton’s State of Union Address (1993) that “all of our efforts to strengthen the economy will fail unless we take bold steps to reform our health care system,” we anticipated significant health care reform that included, among other things, basic coverage for the 37 million uninsured Americans, cost containment, shifting of care from acute care to community-based settings, and resource allocation decisions resting on medical effectiveness rather than the technological imperative (Tanner, 1993).

Of course, the reform movement of that era did not survive partisan politics and effective lobbying efforts, but the die was cast. Now, nearly 20 years later, health care has evolved toward some of these characteristics, and we are on the precipice of significant change as financial incentives for care shift. The Institute of Medicine’s report on The Future of Nursing (2010) clearly identifies emerging roles for nurses, the need for nurses to practice at the full scope of education and licensure, and the need for nursing education to change to keep pace with health care reform.

Other topics that have been prevalent during the past two decades will continue to hold importance. Clinical education for both prelicensure and advanced practice students has been essentially unchanged for decades. We are approaching a crisis in both the cost of clinical education and the insufficient supply of suitable clinical sites if we continue to use traditional approaches to clinical education. Teaching technologies, including simulation
and technology for distance delivery, will also continue to be important as we discern best practices for technology use in nursing education. Critical thinking as a focus of instruction has receded somewhat in its importance, but it has been replaced with a focus on teaching for clinical and ethical reasoning.

This is truly an exciting time in nursing education. As health care evolves, new technologies develop, and the science of learning advances, the scholarship of nursing education will continue to thrive. I expect JNE to continue to lead the way as the premier publication for nursing education scholarship.

I am very pleased that Janis Bellack, PhD, RN, FAAN, has agreed to take over the reins as Editor. Jan is the John Hilton Knowles Professor and President of the MGH Institute of Health Professions. She has served as the Associate Editor of JNE for 14 years, and she is widely respected for her expertise in nursing education leadership, scholarship, and policy. I am confident JNE will be in good hands.

I want to express my deep appreciation to the Editorial Board and the Review Panel, as well as to the management and staff of the publisher, Slack Incorporated, for their support and guidance during the years I have been privileged to serve as Editor.

References

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Editor

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