

Improving Teachers' and Effectiveness by Using a Clinical Simulator Learning Community

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Abstract

Clinical learning is an approach used by medical schools and recently, it has also been used for training new teachers. This is a type of learning that exposes new teachers to the professional knowledge and experience of expert teachers (considerations of opinion and decision-making). The learning process usually takes place within a learning community of teachers. These teachers learn through experience and study the misguided thinking of students as well as learning effective ways of transferring knowledge. Together, they examine personal biases that limit them.

Clinical learning uses simulation (clinical simulator) or real-life processes as its learning materials. In this case, the simulator usually takes place in the field – at the school, in close proximity to practice. Unlike other simulators, the processes of analysis or observation in this context does not deal with relationships and behaviors between persons (a conversation with a parent, confrontation with student, feedback giving, discipline at the classroom, etc.), but deals with professional aspects of the work – the way teachers teach. The simulator comes to assist teachers, administrators, and school to maintain the best pedagogical processes.

12 elementary school teachers participated in using the clinical simulator. First, a learning community was built that was characterized by mutual trust, exposure to good practice, and a solid ethical code. The community then set its teaching goals. The practices they needed to improve – differential teaching processes - were selected. The teachers also defined personal goals for improving their teaching styles. Later on, lessons administered by the group members were videoed. The group analyzed the lessons, gave feedback to the teachers, and formulated

new ways of teaching to repair problems discovered. Following this process, the teachers were asked to describe the effect that undergoing this process had on the effectiveness of their teaching in a personal log. It was found that all the teachers felt an improvement in their styles of teaching far beyond any other professional development processes they had previously participated in.

Keywords: Knowledge transformation, Simulated learning, community-based learning, professional development.