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Letter to the editor

# Training nurse mentor trainers in modern nursing education in Kazakhstan

Educational design and research-based development of training for mentor trainers

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#### **Abstract**

The aim of this educational design-based development process was to create a Mentor Trainer Education (MTE) programme, which would ensure consistent competencies mentor trainers nationwide in Kazakhstan. In addition, the aim was to describe the fundamental design principles for MTE.

Educational design research is an approach to studying and developing educational interventions as a solution to complex educational problems. The method is a cyclical development process which consists of preliminary research and development in real life settings. One characteristic of the development process is circularity, and this includes analysis, design, evaluation, and iterative revision. Modifications for the final educational product are based on continuous feedback gathered from the participants of the development project. The final phase of the educational design research is to describe the design principles for the educational product or problem.

In this educational design research, the data consisted of a literature review, the feedback of participants in mentor trainer education and the perceptions of the educators regarding MTE.

After three iterative cycles the MTE programme was finalized. The educational product consists of learning outcomes, training content and adjustable teaching methods in student-centred learning. Furthermore, the fundamental design principles for MTE were defined. The defined 13 design principles are essential for planning and guiding the implementation of MTE.

Conclusions. Mentor trainer education is one of the means to enhance the quality of clinical learning in modern nursing education. Mentor trainers are needed for organizing systematic mentor training for nurses and for developing unified practices for clinical learning. With proper numbers of competent mentor trainers systematic nurse mentor education is possible to accomplish. The MTE programme was produced to enhance mentor trainers' competencies nationwide in Kazakhstan as a part of nursing education modernization.

Keywords: Education, nursing, mentoring, preceptorship.

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#### Introduction

Clinical practice is an essential part of competence-based bachelor's level nursing education according to EU guidelines [1,2]. Clinical practice offers an authentic learning environment for developing nursing skills, applying theoretical knowledge into practice and the possibility to gain the professional competences defined in educational standards [2,3]. To ensure a high-quality learning process in clinical practice, nurse mentors have a significant role as facilitators of learning [2,4,5]. They guide students to set learning goals, evaluate students' performance and identify areas for improvement, assisting students in achieving learning outcomes while providing safe patient care [5]. According to the literature, one of a mentors' main competencies is to guide the personal growth of students and provide them with psychosocial support and promote professional development [5-7]. Nurse mentors should receive systematic and formalized education concerning effective learning strategies and appropriate evaluation techniques, ensuring preparedness when facilitating students' learning [7-10].

Nurse mentors and nursing teachers need shared understanding and knowledge of competence-based education, constructive assessment, and the methods to support professional development during clinical practice [11,12]. Medical organizations and education institutions both have an important role in developing student-centred clinical learning environments, which enhance competence-based

nursing education and a renewed role for nurses in patient care. Cooperation is essential to build mutual understanding on how to mentor nursing students in clinical practice [13-16].

Competence-based bachelor's level nursing education in medical colleges and universities in Kazakhstan require renewing the nurse mentoring skills and competences. There is a need for trained educators from both medical and educational institutions who are competent to implement mentor training. National education for nurse mentors should strengthen student-centred pedagogy for mentoring and enhance understanding the significance of clinical learning in modern nursing education [17-19].

The main aim of this article is to describe the research-based development process of the Mentor Trainer Education (MTE) programme. The purpose of the development process was to create a Mentor Trainer Education (MTE) programme which aims to ensure congruent competencies to mentor trainers nationwide in Kazakhstan. In addition, the purpose was to describe the design principles for the MTE programme. The development process was part of the modernization of nursing education implemented in co-operation with Finnish and Kazakhstani experts during the Kazakhstan Social Health Insurance Project (SHIP), and especially in the modernization process of the education system for nurses [18,19].

# Method of developing the Mentor Trainer Education programme

Educational design research is a methodological approach which studies and develops educational interventions as a solution to complex educational problems. Educational design research is recommended when the content knowledge to be learned is new, or when the instructional materials are poor, or when education culture and practices require renewal. Educational problems concerning programmes, teaching-learning strategies and educational products can be solved by applying educational design research methods [20-22].

The method is a cyclical development process which consists of preliminary research, a development process in real life settings, and finalizing the programme of the education.

One of the characteristics of the development process is circularity. This includes analysis, design, evaluation, and iterative revision activities.

## Preliminary research phase

In this development project the preliminary research consisted of two autonomous studies. The first part consisted of a descriptive survey. This included a survey of nursing students, a survey of nurse mentors, and a survey of tutor teachers. The aim of the descriptive survey was to find out the current mentoring practices and development needs for clinical learning in medical institutions Kazakhstan. The second study was a descriptive literature review, that aimed to define the quality components in the clinical learning environment relevant to competence based clinical learning. Both studies were conducted in the beginning of 2018. The research results of both studies formed the theoretical background which

Modifications for the final educational product are based on continuous feedback gathered from the participants of the training. In this research process the experiences of the educators formed a significant knowledge source when modifying the educational product. The main aim of the iterative development was to ensure that the final product is relevant and practical for the educational context [20-23]. The main aim of the educational design-based research was to define and generate reusable design principles [20,21]. Design research methods in nursing education have previously been used, for example, for designing a model for educating simulation facilitators [24,25]. Furthermore, the method has been used to help professional development programmers for the global needs of education in Finland [26,27].

guided the pedagogical and thematical solutions during the design process of the MTE programme. Both studies have been documented as a part of the SHIP report.

To create the MTE education programme it was important to define the features for high quality clinical practice in modern nursing education. The main components for student-centred clinical practice were based on the results of the literature review.

Based on the literature review, students are seen as active learners and responsible for defining learning objectives for clinical practice and applying evidence-based knowledge in nursing interventions [28]. The main characteristics needed for effective mentoring are that the mentor is qualified, has a positive attitude towards nursing and is capable of supporting the personal growth of the students. This aspect means also promoting professional development and providing the students with psychosocial support [7]. Tutor teachers ensure and facilitate the quality of the clinical learning process in cooperation with a mentor. A tutor, as a pedagogical expert, assesses the students' competencies in clinical practice and supports nurse mentors in the mentoring process [14,15]. At its best the

assessment of a student's learning process supports the student's self-assessment skills and reflective thinking [29]. Other significant quality factors related to clinical learning include the medical organization as a learning environment, organizational collaboration between medical and educational organizations and the development of clinical practice [30,31]. The results of the literature review guided the creation of the content for planning the first version of the education programme for mentor trainers.

# **Development process phase**

The development process included iterative circles of planning, piloting and modifying the educational product as a prototype. The first version of the educational product is not supposed to be a readymade final version when the piloting begins [20]. This

prototype consisted of learning outcomes, learning activities, assignments and a timetable for a five-day period of education. The core elements of the MTE programme are described in Table 1.

Table 1 - The core elements of mentor trainer education before the first iterative cycle

Learning outcomes	Content of training mentor trainers	Adjustable teaching methods in student-centred learning
Participants are able to understand the basis of applied and academic bachelor's level education, premises of competency-based education and the significance of clinical learning.	Educational standards for nursing education, Competence based learning, basic and professional competencies, evidence based nursing knowledge and essential components of clinical practice	Independent learning:     * Handbook materials  * Setting individual learning goals & Self-assessment  Collaborative learning:     *Small group reflective discussions and presentations
Participants are able to understand and apply student-centred learning theory in mentor education	Learning outcomes Reflective learning Learning styles Assessment in clinical practice	Activating lecture sessions:  *Theoretical introduction  * Experiential learning, combining experience & theory  * Motivating the use of development methods  *Future remembering  *Learning tests
Participants are able to coach nurses in mentoring in varying learning situations and in every stage of student learning process in clinical practice	Cooperation with tutor teacher Mentoring process Ethics in clinical training Mentor - student relationship Constructive feedback	
Participants are able to analyse the versatile feedback of clinical practice and are motivated to further develop the content and the quality of the mentor training	Organizing mentor training Cooperation with stakeholders Development process and methods	

The second iterative circle (2nd MTE) was implemented in September 2018. After analyzing the feedback of the participants and reviewing the developers' perceptions, the mentor trainer education programme was modified further and implemented in November 2019 in the third iterative circle. Evaluation took place in all iterative cycles [20,21]. After three iterative circles, the MTE programme was evaluated, and the design principles were identified.

The iterative cycles, testing, and feedback of the educational product indicate to the designer whether the design has achieved its practical goals and meets the demands set of it [20,21]. Based on the iterative circles, pedagogical methods and content were developed to form a relevant educational product for the Kazakhstan context.

All together 101 mentor trainers were educated during the development process phase. The participants from educational institutions represented the head of nursing programmes, teachers, teaching assistants, and persons responsible for practical studies. Head nurses, general practice nurses, senior nurses, midwives and nurses from different medical organizations were all included, representing a large variety of medical fields. The versatile backgrounds of the participants were an advantage for the development, while the feedback covered the points of view of both educational and medical institutions.

# Product phase and generation of design principles

As an outcome of the multistage development process, a five-day intensive programme named "Training for trainers in national mentorship education in nursing" was finalized. The content and teaching methods were modified based on the feedback of the participants. Stimulating pedagogical methods, for example simulations, a gallery walk with poster presentations and various small group work activities and discussions on the topic of mentoring were used more after each pilot to strengthen the pedagogical skills of the mentor trainers and to encourage the adoption of a student-centred approach to teaching [32]. In terms of the content of the training, the importance of networking between educational and medical institutions was recognized. More time was reserved for the participants to share ideas about best clinical learning practices and to plan the mentor education on a practical level. Furthermore, the mentor trainers should be able to promote the understanding of evidence-based knowledge in clinical practice and in patient centred care.

As a result of the development process the design principles were defined for the education of the mentor trainers (Table 2). The MTE design principles are based on the experience gained from the iterative cycles combined with the research-based knowledge. The purpose of the design principles was to guide the planning of an educational product. The design principles emphasize the core content and a student-centred pedagogy to ensure the expertise as a mentor trainer.

The created design principles are context specific to nursing education [20, 25]. These principles can be applied when creating trainer or mentor or education when developing similar educational products.

Table 2 - Design principles for planning Mentor Trainer Education

Mentor trainers' area of expertise	Design principles for MTE
Teaching knowledge and skills for the implementation of mentor training [7]	The education should offer theoretical knowledge and a practical approach to competence-based education and educational standards in nursing.  Mentor trainers should gain theoretical knowledge and skills of different types of teaching and assessment methods, and the education should provide opportunities to simulate guidance and assessment discussions
Coaching skills and a good attitude for the facilitation of learning and enabling individual learning processes for nurses [7,9]	Mentor trainers need to practice their co-operative role with nurse mentors as a facilitator and a coach in clinical practice context to be able to support nurses' individual learning processes as student mentors.  MTE should include the theoretical and practical aspects of the mentoring process of nursing students
Theoretical knowledge and clinical skills in nursing: Enhancing professional development of competent nurses [7,9]	The training should offer evidence-based nursing knowledge and how to implement it in patient centred care.  MTE should strengthen the trainers' skills of critical thinking and enable them to practice reflective discussions.  The training should promote ethical thinking and decision making. It should enable them to practice reflective discussions.  The training should promote ethical thinking and decision making.
Motivation to develop as a trainer [7]	Mentor trainers should identify their own learning styles and define their own learning goals and development needs as a trainer.  The trainees should get feedback on their progress from their peers and educators. Self-evaluation and reflection of one's own learning experiences should be included in the training
Ability to implement a high- quality learning environment in clinical practice [31]	Mentor trainers should learn the continuous improvement approach and adopt methods to assess the quality of clinical learning practices.  MTE should offer the best practices to cooperate with educational and medical institutions and other stakeholders

#### **Discussion**

The purpose of the development process was to produce a Mentor Trainer Education (MTE) programme and describe the design principles behind the education, which were identified during the development process. The development process was implemented by using an educational design research method. This method is relevant when developing practically oriented education [20]. The three intensive piloting courses offered an authentic context for study and development. Iterative cycles made it possible to pilot and test the content and to test the student-centred pedagogical approach.

This research and development process was based on the previous research on nursing education and clinical learning. Furthermore, the feedback of the participants and perceptions and experiences of the pilot course educators were utilized in the development process. As a result of this education design research process, clear design principles for mentor trainer education were produced. The identified design principles describe the pedagogical approach in the MTE programme. Furthermore, the design principles offer practical guidance for selecting the content for the MTE.

The design principles are aligned with the resent research results on mentoring competences in nursing [7,9,12]. The identified design principles for educating mentor trainers are context specific, although they are applicable when planning similar education for nurse mentors. This educational design process was implemented in authentic settings and the results could be utilized to solve other practical educational challenges [20,24]. When planning and implementing education cultural issues must also be recognized and respected.

Mentor trainers have a significant role in modernizing clinical learning practices while educating qualified nurse mentors. International research results indicate that systematic and formalized mentor education is needed for developing the quality of mentoring and clinical practice in nursing education [7,9,12]. Mentor education is beneficial from several points of view. Firstly, trained mentors gain personal satisfaction at work, as well as

mentoring competencies, and they tend to update skills and knowledge in nursing and teaching. Secondly mentor training provides capabilities to trained mentors to observe and support the professional development of the nursing students. Furthermore, trained mentors and high-quality clinical training enhances the attraction of nursing education [19].

The created educational product, the MTE programme, provides a model for developing a network of trained mentor trainers and a way of strengthening the quality of clinical practice in modern nursing education in Kazakhstan. This educational development process was implemented in cooperation with international partners, which enabled the pluralistic discussion and the renewal of educational approach of all the stakeholders.

#### **Conclusions**

The purpose of this educational design research was to produce an educational product for training mentor trainers. The product was aimed to enhance congruent competencies of mentor trainers nationwide in Kazakhstan as a part of the modernization of nursing education. Due to the renewal of nursing education, there was a need to ensure the aligned implementation of competence-based education in clinical practice.

As a result of the educational design research, the design principles for high-quality MTE were developed. The design principles can guide the future planning and implementation of MTE in the country. Furthermore, the design principles are in line with the evidence-based competencies which are essential in student-centred and competence-based mentoring.

The design principles and identified competence areas can be used by medical and educational

institutions when planning mentor trainer education to ensure sufficient numbers of mentor trainers. Competent mentor trainers are needed for organizing systematic mentor training for nurses and for developing unified practices for clinical learning. Furthermore, competent mentor trainers enhance the professional competencies of nurses. With a proper number of competent mentor trainers, systematic nurse mentor education is possible.

The impact of MTE on bachelor's level nursing education and especially on clinical learning was not possible to evaluate in this developmental time frame. Further research is needed to evaluate and follow up the impact of the MTE programme and the competences of the mentor trainers.

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# Қазақстанда заманауи мейірбике білімі жүйесі аясында мейірбике жаттықтырушыларды даярлау

Жаттықтырушыларға арналған білім беруді жобалау және ғылыми негізделген әзірлеме дайындау

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#### Түйіндеме

Қазақстанда заманауи мейірбике білімі жүйесі аясында ментор-жаттықтырушы мейіргерлерді даярлау үдерісінің мақсаты Қазақстан бойынша ментор-жаттықтырушылардың құзыреттіліктерін қамтамасыз ететін мамандарды даярлау бағдарламасын әзірлеу болып табылады. Сонымен қатар ментор-жаттықтырушыларды даярлау үшін жобалаудың негізгі қағидаларын сипаттау мақсаты көзделді.

Білім беру әдісін жобалауды зерттеу – білім берудің күрделі мәселелерін шешу үшін білім беру технологияларын зерттеу және әзірлеу тәсілі. Әдіс шынайы жағдайдағы алдын ала зерттеулер мен әзірлемелерден тұратын циклді әзірлеу үдерісін білдіреді. Әзірлеу үдерісі сипаттамаларының бірі циклділік болып табылады. Циклділік өз кезегінде талдау, жобалау, бағалау және итеративті қайта қарауды қамтиды. Білім беру процесінің өнімін модификациялау үшін әзірлеу жобасына қатысушы-білім алушылардан тұрақты кері байланыс алуға негізделген. Білім беруді әдісін жобалау зерттеуінің қорытындысы білім беру өнімін немесе мәселені жобалау қағидаларын сипаттау болып табылады.

Білім беру әдісін жобалаудың бұл зерттеуінде деректер әдебиеттерді шолудан, тәлімгерлерді оқыту қатысушыларының пікірлерінен және педагогтардың жаттықтырушыларды оқыту туралы түсініктерінен құралды.

Yш итерациялық циклден кейін жаттықтырушыларды оқыту бағдарламасы аяқталды. Білім беру өнімі оқыту нәтижелерінен, оның мазмұны мен оқыту барысындағы дайындалатын оқыту әдістерінен құралды. Сонымен қатар жаттықтырушыларды оқытуды жобалаудың басты қағидалары анықталды. Анықталған 13 жобалау қағидасы менторжаттықтырушы мейіргерлерді оқытуды жоспарлау мен оған жетекшілік етуде маңызды рөл атқарады.

Қорытынды. Ментор-жаттықтырушы мейіргерлерді оқыту мейірбикелік істегі заманауи білім беру жүйесінде клиникалық оқыту сапасын арттыру құралдарының бірі болып табылады. Ментор-жаттықтырушылар тәлімгер-мейірбикелерді жүйелі оқытуды ұйымдастыру және клиникалық оқу-тәжірибенің бірыңғай әдістемелерін әзірлеу үшін қажет. Құзыретті жаттықтырушылардың жеткілікті саны дайындалып болған жағдайда тәлімгер-мейірбикелерді жүйелі түрде оқыту мүмкіндігі қолжетімді болады. Жаттықтырушыларды оқыту бағдарламасы мейірбике білімін жаңғырту шеңберінде Қазақстан бойынша тәлімгерлер құзыреттілігін арттыру үшін әзірленген болатын.

**Түйін сөздер**: білім беру, мейірбике ісі, тәлімгерлік, ментор-жаттықтырушы, куратордың жетекшілігі, студенттердің практикасы.

## Подготовка ментор-тренера медицинских сестер в системе современного сестринского образования Казахстана

Образовательное проектирование и научно-обоснованная разработка тренингов для ментор-тренера

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#### Резюме

Целью данного процесса разработки на основе образовательного проектирования было создание программы обучения ментор-тренеров, которая обеспечила бы последовательные компетенции ментор-тренеров по всей стране в Казахстане. Кроме того, цель состояла в том, чтобы описать основные принципы проектирования для обучения ментор-тренеров.

Исследование образовательного проектирования - это подход к изучению и разработке образовательных вмешательств как решения сложных образовательных проблем. Метод представляет собой циклический процесс разработки, который состоит из предварительных исследований и разработок в реальных условиях. Одной из характеристик процесса разработки является цикличность, и это включает в себя анализ, проектирование, оценку и итеративный пересмотр. Модификации для конечного образовательного продукта основаны на постоянной обратной связи, полученной от участников проекта разработки. Заключительной фазой исследования образовательного проектирования является описание принципов проектирования образовательного продукта или проблемы.

В этом исследовании по проектированию образования данные состояли из обзора литературы, отзывов участников обучения наставников и представлений педагогов об обучение ментор-тренеров.

После трех итерационных циклов программа обучение ментор-тренеров была завершена. Образовательный продукт состоит из результатов обучения, содержания обучения и настраиваемых методов обучения в процессе обучения, ориентированного на учащихся. Кроме того, были определены основополагающие принципы проектирования обучения ментортренеров. Определенные 13 принципов проектирования имеют важное значение для планирования и руководства внедрением обучения ментор-тренеров.

Выводы. Обучение ментор-тренеров является одним из средств повышения качества клинического обучения в современном сестринском образовании. Ментор -тренеры необходимы для организации систематического обучения медицинских сестернаставников и для разработки унифицированных практик клинического обучения. При надлежащем количестве компетентных ментор-тренеров возможно систематическое обучение медицинских сестер-наставников. Программа обучения ментор-тренеров была разработана для повышения компетентности наставников по всей стране в Казахстане в рамках модернизации сестринского образования.

**Ключевые слова**: образование, сестринское дело, наставничество, ментор-тренер, практика студентов под руководством куратора.