EFFECTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF CLINICAL INSTRUCTORS

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In order to prepare students for the professional nursing role, nursing education programs must provide clinical experience along with theoretical knowledge. Student participation in clinical practice is often the most important portion for acquiring new nursing skills (Moscaritolo, 2009). Students have a small amount of time in the clinical setting to learn skills, apply theory, and develop critical thinking necessary for the professional role. The primary goal of nursing education is to assist students into development of competent practicing nurses. Therefore, clinical instructors must be effective in order to provide the best learning experiences for each clinical situation. Instructor characteristics that have a positive effect on student outcomes must be identified and utilized. Exploration of effective characteristics of clinical instructors provides insight into improvement of educational programs for developing nurses.

Background and Significance

Citing poor definition of effective clinical teaching, and the lack of a valid tool to evaluate clinical teachers, researchers Mogan and Knox (1987) conducted a study to identify characteristics of “best” and “worst” clinical teachers as perceived by students and university nursing faculty. Using the Nursing Clinical Teacher Effectiveness Inventory (NCTEI), Mogan and Knox (1987) explored the definitions of behaviors believed to be beneficial to student learning in the clinical setting.
Mogan and Knox stress the importance of defining characteristics of effective clinical teachers because of the nature of the clinical setting. The clinical arena is often filled with stress and tension; pain, suffering, and the threat of death create an atmosphere unsuitable for learning. Clinical experiences sometimes take place in a highly charged atmosphere where possible grave consequences can occur as the result of errors the learner might commit (Mogan & Knox, 1987). Learners are often anxious and under a great deal of stress to perform new skills without the benefit of large amounts of practice. Student perception of how clinical faculty behave and relate to them, both positively and negatively, influence student anxiety levels, and consequently, their ability to learn (Cook, 2005). Instructors are responsible for ensuring student learning while gaining hands-on experience to practice techniques. At the same time, educators are also responsible for ensuring patients receive high quality, secure, and safe nursing care (Tang, Chou, & Chiang, 2005). For these reasons, it is imperative that clinical instructors possess the skills and strategies to create clinical experiences conducive to learning and patient safety (Mogan & Knox, 1987).

In 1983 the National League for Nursing (NLN) was developed to deliver educational improvement services in the pursuit of quality nursing education for all types of nursing education programs. The organization is dedicated to excellence in nursing education, and is the preferred membership organization for nurse faculty and leaders in nursing education (NLN, 2009).

The NLN recommends having well-prepared faculty to meet the educational needs of a diverse population of student nurses. Faculty should consist of individuals with expertise as educators, clinicians, and researchers; faculty members are to be
accountable for promoting excellence and providing leadership (NLN, 2009). Core Competencies were developed in 2005 by the NLN for nurse educators. The core competencies are divided into eight individual competency statements. Competency three, use assessment and evaluation strategies, states faculty are to use assessment and evaluation data to enhance the teaching-learning process and further states faculty are to demonstrate skill in the design and use of tools for assessing clinical practice (NLN, 2005). With these guidelines in mind, nursing faculty must strive to define and identify effective characteristics which are most beneficial to student learning outcomes.

Statement of Problem

Clinical faculty members have a pivotal role in the education and development of nursing students. Exploration of effective characteristics provides insight into improvement of educational programs for developing nurses. Therefore, it is useful to identify characteristics that lead to highly effective skills and techniques of those in instructional roles. More research is needed to clarify the characteristics of clinical faculty that are most beneficial to student learning outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the perceptions of associate degree nursing (ADN) students and faculty of characteristics of clinical faculty that are most beneficial to student learning outcomes and whether there are differences between these two groups.

Research Questions

1. What do (ADN) students and faculty perceive as important characteristics of clinical instructors that benefit student learning outcomes?
2. Are there differences between ADN students’ and faculty’s perceptions of characteristics of clinical instructors that benefit student learning outcomes?

Definition of Terms

*Conceptual Definition of Characteristics of Effective Teachers.*

Characteristics of effective teachers are divided into five sub-concepts: teaching ability, nursing competence, personality traits, interpersonal relationships, and evaluation (Mogan & Knox, 1987).

*Teaching Ability.*

Students expect clinical educators to be advisors, guides, and to offer information and explanations about clinical situations (Eleigil & Sari, 2008). Teaching ability is the process of transmission of skills and attitudes; the creation of an environment that enables learning (Mogan & Knox, 1987). Teaching ability includes instructional skills, creating a positive learning environment, and promoting learning (Tang et al., 2008; Wolf, Bender, Beitz, Wieland, & Vito, 2004).

*Nursing Competence.*

Nursing is a practice-based discipline and is measured in terms of clinical competence (Lee, Cholowski, & Williams, 2002). Nursing competence is the clinical instructor’s theoretical and clinical knowledge used during nursing practice, including the instructor’s attitude toward the profession (Mogan & Knox, 1987). Professional competence includes an interest in the patient’s care, serving as a role model for students, and skillful use of nursing techniques (Tang et al., 2008; Wolf et al., 2004).
**Personality Traits.**

Personality traits include instructor attitudes, emotional tendencies, and character traits (Tang et al., 2005). Personality traits are the emotional tendencies and character traits not specifically related to nursing, teaching, or interpersonal relationships (Mogan & Knox, 1987). Behaviors include the ability to control their temper and show patience, treat students sincerely, show empathy toward students, and possess an enthusiastic attitude in clinical teaching (Tang et al., 2005).

**Interpersonal Relationships.**

Interpersonal relationships refer to the relationship between students and the instructor. A strong student-instructor relationship enhances the educational experience (Wolf et al., 2004). Interpersonal relationships are the state of reciprocal interest and communication between two or more people. Interpersonal relationships do not include therapeutic relationships (Mogan & Knox, 1987). Behaviors include avoiding oversupervision of students, showing support to students, using of appropriate communication channels, and treating students as people with thought and wisdom (Tang et al., 2005).

**Evaluation.**

Students value guidance and feedback without feeling the instructor is belittling them (Wolf, 2004). Evaluation is the type and amount of feedback the student receives from the teacher regarding clinical performances and written assignments (Mogan & Knox, 1987). Evaluation includes providing timely feedback, providing constructive criticism, and praise for work done well (Wolf, 2004).
Operational Definition of Characteristics of Effective Teachers.

This variable will be measured by the Nursing Clinical Teacher Effectiveness Inventory (NCTEI) which is a 48-item checklist that addresses the five subscales of teaching ability, nursing competence, personality traits, interpersonal relationships, and evaluation (Mogan & Knox, 1987).

Assumptions

Assumptions of this descriptive study are:

1. Students with high levels of stress and anxiety are less confident about their abilities related to the clinical experience.
2. Student’s self-esteem and self-confidence increase when clinical faculty demonstrates supportive behaviors.
3. Clinical instructors perform their roles with professional competence.
4. Effective clinical instruction requires outstanding characteristics to promote learning.
5. Students and faculty will answer the questions in an honest manner.

Study Limitations

Generalization is limited by small sample size and limited geographic area. Student participation is voluntary; therefore, there is the potential for only those with either positive or negative clinical teaching experiences who may volunteer. Future studies should include other demographic data to further explore gender differences.

Summary

The goal of nursing education is to facilitate learning in order for students to develop into competent practicing nurses. The skills, competence, and effective
behaviors of clinical instructors are vital to successful learner outcomes. Instructor behaviors that have a positive effect on student outcomes must be identified and utilized. Exploration of effective characteristics of clinical instructors will be beneficial to improving educational programs for developing nurses.
Chapter II

**Literature Review**

*Introduction*

Clinical instructors have an important role in the education and in the development of nursing students. Exploration of effective characteristics of clinical instructors provides insight into improvement of educational programs for developing nurses. The purpose of this descriptive study is to explore the perceptions of characteristics of clinical instructors which are most beneficial to student learning outcomes. This is a replication of Gignac-Caille and Oermann’s (2001) study which utilized a descriptive approach to determine perceived importance of characteristics of clinical instructors. The research questions are: What do Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) students and faculty perceive as important characteristics of clinical instructors that benefit student learning outcomes? Are there differences between ADN students’ and faculty’s perceptions of characteristics of clinical instructors that benefit student learning outcomes? Findings about characteristics of those in instructional roles will be of value in devising a valid and reliable evaluation tool to assess the effectiveness of clinical teachers.
Organization of Literature

The literature review examines selected studies associated with characteristics of effective clinical instructors. Quantitative and qualitative studies were reviewed to identify previous research conclusions. Historical and recent literature was used to identify and define current evidence in practice. The supportive literature reviewed is divided into three sections:

1. Identification of characteristics of effective clinical instructors
2. Definition of characteristics of effective clinical instructors
3. Perceived importance of the characteristics of effective clinical instructors

Identification of Characteristics of Effective Clinical Instructors

Clinical and classroom instructor effectiveness has an impact on student learning outcomes. The student teacher relationship is important for increased satisfaction and competence in the nursing student’s learning process. Using a descriptive design with a self-reporting questionnaire, Sieh and Bell (1994) conducted a study to identify important characteristics of effective clinical teachers at the associate degree level. Research questions were: (a) What do associate degree nursing students perceive as important characteristics of effective clinical teachers? (b) What do associate degree nursing faculty perceive as important characteristics of effective clinical teachers? (c) Are there differences in what associate degree nursing students and associate degree nursing faculty perceive as important characteristics of effective clinical teachers? and (d) Do associate degree nursing students’ perceptions become more similar to associate degree nursing faculty’s perceptions as the students’ level of education increases?
The study population consisted of 216 students and 25 faculty from two associate degree nursing programs in the southwestern United States. The convenience sample consisted of 201 returned questionnaires of which 199 were complete and eligible for analysis. Twenty-five faculty were eligible to participate however only 22 returned completed questionnaires. Student ages ranged from 19 to 56 years with a mean age of 32.33 years (SD = 8.36). One hundred seventy-one (86%) were female and 27 (14%) were male. Eighty-seven (44%) of the student responders were in the level I/first semester, 32 (16%) were in level I/second semester, and 80 (40%) were level II/first semester. Faculty member ages ranged from 38 to 68 years with a mean age of 47.3 (SD = 6.86). All faculty members were female. The highest degrees held by faculty included 7 (32%) BSN, 13 (59%) Master of Science in Nursing, 1 (4.5%) Doctor of Philosophy, and 1 (4.5%) other (Sieh & Bell, 1994).

The study utilized the Nursing Clinical Teacher Effectiveness Inventory (NCTEI) to measure respondent perceptions of 48 items, each describing an important teaching characteristic. The tool is divided into subsets of clinical teacher characteristics: teaching ability, interpersonal relationship, personality, nursing competence, and evaluation. Respondents rate the importance of each characteristic on a five-point Likert-type scale. The tool was tested for reliability with subset coefficients ranging from .82 to .89. The tool was also considered to have content and face validity by the authors (Sieh & Bell, 1994).

The study found that students rated “corrects students’ mistakes without belittling them” as the most effective characteristic with a mean of 4.85 (SD .41). In contrast faculty rated “encourages a climate of mutual respect” as the highest characteristic for
clinical instructors with a mean of 4.77 (SD = .43). While students and faculty had differencing rankings for many of the characteristics, t-tests revealed no significant difference in any of the five subsets. To determine if student perceptions become increasingly similar to faculty’s perceptions as the students’ level of education progresses, analysis of variance of the responses between the four groups was completed. Two subsets were found to have a statistically significant difference: teaching ability (F = 3.324, p = .021) and nursing competence (F = 3.476, p = .017). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted and determined the subset for teaching ability was F = 3.3245 (df = 3, p = .0206). The Student-Newman-Keuls procedure determined level I/second semester students rated teaching significantly higher than level II/first semester students. The ANOVA for subset nursing competence was F = 3.4764 (df = 3, p = .0169). The Student-Newman-Keuls procedure determined that level I/second semester students rated nursing competence significantly higher than both level I/first semester and level II/first semester (Sieh & Bell, 1994).

Student perceptions did not become more similar to faculty’s perceptions through progression of the program. Level 1, second semester students’ perceptions were most similar to the faculty’s in the subsets of nursing competence and teaching ability. This study confirmed agreement with previous studies on the six most important characteristics: takes responsibility for own actions, demonstrates clinical skill and judgment, is approachable, is well prepared for teaching, and is a good role model. However, students rated “is a good role model” eighth, whereas in previous studies this characteristic was rated most critical. Faculty perceptions were consistent with previous studies by rating the evaluation subset the highest. Also in agreement with previous
studies, faculty rated “personal attributes” as the lowest subset. Student and faculty perception of important characteristics of effective clinical teachers were not statistically different. During examination of individual items, faculty and students agreed on 5 of the 10 most important characteristics: corrects students’ mistakes without belittling them, is approachable, is well prepared for teaching, is a good role model, and encourages a climate of mutual respect (Sieh & Bell, 1994). Sieh and Bell (1994) recommend further exploration of the characteristics of effective clinical teachers in order to develop a tool in which to measure teacher effectiveness. It is also suggested that teachers use the study to evaluate and improve their own teaching methods.

Berg and Lindseth (2004) proposed nursing students develop perceptions of the characteristics of effective and ineffective instructors early in their educational careers. Their descriptive study examined the characteristics that emerged as students’ described their perceptions of effective and ineffective clinical and theory nursing instructors. Specifically, what characteristics are students truly looking at when completing evaluations? The study population consisted of 252 sophomore, junior, or senior baccalaureate nursing students in a university in the Midwestern United Stated. The convenience sample of 171 respondents included: 48 of 90 (53.3%) sophomore students, 51 of 83 (61.4%) junior students, and 72 of 79 (91.1%) seniors. Students ages were between 19 to 48 years (mean age = 24.5). Respondent years of college education were 4.38 (Berg & Lindseth, 2004).

The investigators developed a questionnaire consisting of three parts: demographic information, two open ended questions to identify characteristics used to label instructors as effective or ineffective, and two questions about the grading
techniques and individual coursework. A pilot questionnaire was tested with 11 students and revealed ease in understanding. Concept analysis consisted of four steps: (a) students’ written descriptions were read to obtain a feel for their overall responses, (b) significant statements and phrases pertaining directly to the questions were extracted, (c) categories were formulated from these significant statements and phrases, and (d) categories were clustered into the 10 most frequently occurring themes (Berg & Lindseth, 2004).

Personality, defined as the distinctive qualities and traits of the instructor, emerged as the highest ranking characteristic of the top 10 characteristics of effective and ineffective instructors. Effective instructors were seen as easy to get along with and personable to students, while ineffective instructors appeared rigid with no flexibility. Teaching method, defined as instructional techniques of the instructor, was chosen as the next most frequent. Effective instructors were perceived to teach at the student knowledge level and provide frequent feedback while ineffective instructors were perceived to teach at a level higher than the students’ understanding. Remaining categories identified were: presentation, defined as the manner of delivery of course materials; demeanor/attitude, defined as the behavior or conduct of an instructor toward the students and demonstration of concern for students’ needs; enthusiasm, defined as eagerness in the teaching experience; conduct defined as instruction, actions and behavior toward students in the classroom; knowledge, defined as the instructor’s grasp of course material; helpfulness/availability, defined as willingness to help students and availability outside of class; communication, defined as the exchange of course information on
communicating expectations; and fairness, defined as the equitable treatment of students (Berg & Lindseth, 2004).

The authors noted that personality characteristics received the highest overall ratings. This finding is in contrast to previous studies in which personality traits have received very low ratings. The second highest rating, “teaching methods,” is consistent with previous studies in which teaching abilities have been rated as very important. It was also noted that while students identified grades as one reason for labeling an instructor as effective or ineffective, the authors found that coursework had a larger impact of student opinion, especially with senior students. The finding suggested that instructors need to possess a variety of characteristics to meet student expectations. Further research needs to be conducted to explore whether student expectations change as they advance through coursework (Berg & Lindseth, 2004).

Despite a wealth of data regarding clinical teaching, the criteria for defining effective clinical teaching remains poor. Using exploratory descriptive techniques, Kelly (2007) completed a study to compare how second and third year nursing students’ view effective clinical teaching in diploma and baccalaureate programs. The authors explored what teacher characteristics and contextual influences impact student learning in clinical settings.

The population consisted of nursing students at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, British Columbia. Second and third year students were invited to participate resulting in a convenience sample of 15 students at the end of their second year and 15 students at the end of their third year (Kelly, 2007). The authors chose 30 to 40 minute audio taped interviews to gather data obtained for the following questions:
1. Tell me about the most effective clinical teacher you have had to date (no names please). I need a detailed description of what made that teacher effective for you.

2. What three qualities do you believe are most important for teaching effectively in clinical settings? Please rank order those.

3. In addition to what you have shared with me so far, is there anything else that influences (enhances or detracts from) your learning in the clinical area? (Kelly, 2007, p. 887-888)

Questions were broad and open ended in order to capture any contextual influences on student perceptions of effective clinical teaching (Kelly, 2007). The data were transcribed verbatim and entered into QSR NUD-IST for management purposes. Each interview was then coded and analyzed in order to identify categories of interest. Four main categories of data were identified in descending order of importance: knowledge, feedback, communication skills, and environmental factors (Kelly, 2007).

The author found an overwhelming amount of data indicating “teacher knowledge” as the highest student rated category for effectiveness. Characteristics from this category cited by students as effective included “application of theory and clinical experience of instructors” and the “instructor’s ability to apply material to real life learning situations.” Students rated feedback as the second highest rated category citing the need to have timely feedback on tasks, teacher availability, and teacher’s allowing students to have time to state their own views. Students also emphasized the need to have privacy when receiving praise or constructive criticism. Students voiced concerns about the importance of clinical site, citing staff incivility as a major concern. Poor peer
support, groups, and cliques were all mentioned as variables that had a negative influence on the clinical learning experience (Kelly, 2007).

Kelly (2007) concluded the study concurs with previous studies in that nursing student’s perceptions of effective clinical teaching is contingent on the instructor’s clinical competence, communication, and feedback skills. This new insight into instructor characteristics may imply that the trend toward temporary employment of clinical instructors is a poor practice. Kelly suggests that further studies should include teacher ratios, length of employment, teacher qualification, preparation and experience, contractual limitations, and staff’s acceptance of students.

**Definition of the Characteristics of Effective Clinical Instructors**

The clinical component of nursing education is an essential part of the development of competent nurses. Nurse instructors play an important role in the professional development of student nurses. Identification of effective characteristics of nurse instructors provides useful information for student instruction in the clinical setting and is crucial for improving the quality of clinical education (Gignac-Caille & Oermann, 2001). A descriptive exploratory study by Gignac-Caille and Oermann (2001) examined the characteristics of effective clinical instructors identified by students and faculty at the Associate Degree level as well as the differences of perception between students and faculty of these characteristics.

Five randomly selected schools of nursing in Michigan were utilized for the study setting. The study population consisted of 370 student nurses and 184 faculty members from the five school’s Associate of Nursing programs. A convenience sample of 292 student nurses and 59 clinical faculty were recruited from the population. Students were
included from all four levels of the nursing programs with 11 (4%) enrolled in first year – first semester of the program, 164 (56%) in the first year – second semester, 10 (3%) in the second year – first semester, and 107 (37%) in the second year – second semester.

Many students (n = 127, 44%) were completing medical surgical courses. The majority of students (n = 257, 88%) reported having clinical practice in a hospital setting. Faculty consisted of 30 (51%) full time employees and 28 (48%) part time employees with a mean of 19.67 hours (SD = 5.87) taught per week. Teaching experience ranged from 1 to 30 years with a mean of 9.68 (SD = 7.37). Educational preparation of the faculty members was at either the BSN (n = 26, 44%) or MSN (n = 28, 48%) levels. Faculty members taught either clinical only (n = 26, 44%) or both lecture and clinical (n = 28, 48%) with the majority teaching medical surgical nursing (n = 24, 41%) and in the hospital setting (n = 45, 76%) (Gignac-Caille & Oermann, 2001).

The study utilized the Nursing Clinical Teacher Effectiveness Inventory (NCTEI). The NCTEI consist of 48 items describing important instructor characteristics. The characteristics are divided into 5 sub-scales of clinical instructor characteristics which included teaching ability, interpersonal relationships, personality, nursing competence, and evaluation. The respondent’s perceived level of importance of each clinical instructor characteristic is rated by participants using a five point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never important) to 5 (always important). Validity and reliability were established by literature review and pilot testing by a panel of experts with the alpha coefficient for teaching – $\alpha = .80$, nursing competence – $\alpha = .78$, evaluation – $\alpha = .73$, interpersonal relationships – $\alpha = .78$, and personality traits – $\alpha = .75$. The alpha coefficient for the entire tool was $\alpha = .90$ (Gignac-Caille & Oermann, 2001).
Gignac-Caille and Oermann (2001) asked students and faculty to identify the characteristics of clinical instructors they believed to be important to student learning outcomes on a five-point scale, from 1 (never important) to 5 (always important). Identified as always important for effectiveness as a clinical instructor by 258 students (88%), “demonstrates clinical skill and judgment” was chosen as the most important characteristic (mean = 4.90, SD = .35). Examination of the top 10 characteristics revealed that 4 were from the evaluation subscale and 3 were from the teaching ability subscale. Students identified evaluation skills of the instructor as the most important characteristic subscale (mean = 4.73, SD = .42). Least important characteristics included “directs students to useful literature in nursing” (mean = 4.19, SD = .82), “having a good sense of humor” (mean = 4.27, SD = .77), and “showing a personal interest in students” (mean = 4.29, SD = .87).

Faculty perceived the most important characteristic of an effective clinical instructor as “explains clearly” (mean = 4.97, SD = 0.18) along with “is well prepared for teaching” (mean = 4.92, SD = .28), and “is approachable in the clinical setting” (mean = 4.92, SD = .28). Faculty identified behaviors from the subscales of “interpersonal relationships” and “teaching behaviors” as the most important characteristics of clinical instructors. Faculty chose “directs students to useful literature in nursing” (mean = 3.90, SD = .77) as the least important characteristics and the subscale of “nursing competence” as the least important behavior category (Gignac-Caille & Oermann, 2001).

Student identification of “demonstrates clinical skills and judgment” as the most important characteristic of clinical instructors supports previous research on the importance of clinical competency in clinical teaching effectiveness. The importance of
clinical competency was also related to students’ progress in the nursing program, with the first year, first semester students giving this category the highest rating. Additionally, a negative correlation was found between the amount of clinical courses taken by students and the ranking of the level of importance of the clinical competency subscale. This finding may indicate that students with fewer clinical hours value nursing competency and teaching skills more than the students with more experience. Faculty rated all the characteristics of clinical instructors at higher levels of importance than the students. Scoring by faculty is consistent with previous research; however, the most important characteristic rated by faculty, “explains clearly,” was not among the top ten characteristics identified in those previous studies. The authors indicated a need to further explore the perceptions of characteristics based on employment status of faculty, particularly because there is a large population of part-time clinical faculty in many ADN programs (Gignac-Caille & Oermann, 2001).

Peer, self, administrative, and student evaluations along with student outcomes are frequently used to document faculty teaching performance and effectiveness. Wolf, Bender, Beitz, Weiland, and Vito (2004) conducted a descriptive study of undergraduate and graduate nursing student exploring characteristics of strengths and weaknesses in faculty teaching performance. The research study was conducted through course evaluations at a private, urban, religiously affiliated university. The study population was derived from summary course evaluation forms of undergraduate and graduate course sections analyzed from 300-, 400-, 500-, and 600-level nursing courses, including theory, practicum, clinical sections, and electives. After examination for inclusion criteria, the study sample consisted of a total of 317 eligible forms. Form amounts by level were:
300 = 56, 400 = 97, 500 = 37, and 600 = 127 (Wolf et al., 2004). The study instrument was comprised of university instructor evaluation forms distributed at the conclusion of courses. Each evaluation form asked the question, “What do you feel were the strong and weak points of the instructor?” The forms were collected and comments were transcribed. Investigators then categorized the comments by theme to analyze for thematic clusters. Investigator triangulation established the rigor of the study (Wolf et al., 2004).

Teaching strategies, faculty enthusiasm and knowledge base, and faculty support of student efforts were all mentioned as faculty strengths by undergraduate students. Other noted positive attributes were faculty patience, faculty answers questions, and clear organized courses. Undergraduate students made more comments concerning faculty strengths than faculty weaknesses; however, they were critical about faculty teaching performance. Disorganization, a need for greater clarity, poor time management, and inaccessibility were themes for faculty weaknesses. Graduate student comments emphasized faculty excellence, knowledge base, and flexibility. Both groups appreciated fair grading, teaching excellence, use of a variety of teaching methods, and availability. Graduate student comments included a need for more feedback and consistency as areas of weakness (Wolf et al., 2004).

Wolf et al. (2004) suggested that good teachers create positive relationships with students, are professional role models, and provide students with interpersonal support. Conversely, poor teachers lack organization of content, do not develop good relationships with students, and exhibit behaviors that interfere with student understanding of presented material. Undergraduate students were critical of faculty who lacked
confidence confirming the opinion that expert, seasoned teachers should instruct
begging students. The potential source of perceived faculty weakness may be limited
formal preparation in the teaching role. Further research is needed to explore faculty
whose education included courses in teaching methods compared to those who lack this
background (Wolf et al., 2004).

Responsibilities of nursing instructors include ensuring that students learn theory,
gain clinical experience, practice techniques, and develop into knowledgeable nurses.
Clinical nursing faculty possess four categories of important qualities: professional
competence, interpersonal relationship, personality characteristics, and teaching ability.
Tang, Chou, and Chiang (2005) conducted a study to understand of the four categories of
qualities which is the main contributor of effectiveness among clinical nursing faculty.
To conduct the analysis the authors sought answers to these questions: “(a) What are the
characteristics of effective and ineffective clinical teachers? (b) What are the differences
between effective and ineffective clinical teachers? and (c) Do students at different
schools have the same opinions about what constitutes effective and ineffective clinical
teachers?” (p. 188)

The study population consisted to two nursing schools in Taiwan. One school
was public and one was private. After elimination of non-respondents and respondents
who provided invalid answers, the convenience sample consisted of 214 students (91%,
public: n = 52, private: n = 162) (Tang et al., 2005). The authors used a questionnaire
identifying 50 important characteristics of teachers divided into four main categories:
professional competence, interpersonal relationships, personality characteristics, and
teaching ability. Respondents were asked to rate each characteristic using a five point
Likert-type scale (5 = greater importance/teacher performs well to 1 = no importance, teacher performs poorly). Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was used to identify item consistency with professional competence – α = .67, interpersonal relationship – α = .82, personality characteristics – α = .86, teaching ability – α = .87, and a total instrument α = .92 (Tang et al., 2005).

Students completing the questionnaire were asked to think about two teachers from personal experience, one liked and the other disliked, and then were instructed to use this information to evaluate the teacher effectiveness in the four categories. Results were: interpersonal relationships – mean = 4.48, SD .08, professional competence – mean 4.46, SD = .12, personality characteristics – mean = 4.45, SD = .09, and teaching ability – mean = 4.43, SD = .09. The lowest rating for ineffective teachers was personality characteristics = mean = 2.67, SD = .26 followed by interpersonal relationships – mean = 2.69, SD = .20, teaching ability – mean = 2.90, SD = .25, and professional competence – mean = 3.37, SD = .30. Using the paired t-test, the authors found statistically significant difference (p < .000) between effective and ineffective teachers with the largest difference in interpersonal relationships (t = 30.38). Pearson correlation value was r = .48 (p < .01) for the effective teacher and r = .87 (p < .000) for the ineffective teacher indicating that the perceptions of teacher effectiveness were the same at both schools (Tang et al., 2005).

The authors found that effective teachers possess strong qualities in all four behavioral categories. Interpersonal relationships received the highest score, with “solves problems with students” as the highest rated behavior. Ineffective teachers scored lowest in interpersonal behavior, with students rating “treats students sincerely and objectively”
as the lowest scoring behavior. Study results showed effective and ineffective teachers may experience difficulty to” endure students’ mistakes and avoid scolding them”. The authors suggest using this study as a guide in order to help teachers become more empathetic and tolerant of student inadequacies (Tang et al., 2005, p. 190).

Another study conducted to examine the characteristics of effective clinical instructors was completed by Hanson and Stenvig (2008). Because the clinical component accounts for a large portion of baccalaureate nursing education, it is beneficial to identify good clinical nursing educator attributes as perceived by recent BSN program graduates. Using a study framework blending the elements of cognitive field theory, the humanistic philosophy of teaching and learning, the gestalt theory of learning, and Hergenhahn’s behavioral change model, Hanson and Stenvig (2008) studied the research question, “What clinical educator attributes do baccalaureate degree nursing graduates perceive as the attributes that best prepared them to become nurses?” (p. 39)

A pool of graduates from two BSN programs in South Dakota was used as the population for the study. Graduate names were compiled from graduation bulletins then cross-matched with names of Registered Nurses on State Board of Nursing license lists. Invitation letters were mailed to 65 potential participants. Inclusion criteria included graduation from an accredited BSN program in the previous 6 to 18 months, current employment as a bedside nurse with patient care responsibilities, and employment at the same facility for at least 6 months. After examining eligibility requirements, a convenience sample of six participants was interviewed (Hanson & Stenvig, 2008).

Interviews were conducted in a face-to-face format. The first question asked of participants was, “What is a good clinical educator to you?” Questions for later
interviews were based on individual responses during previous interviews. Data analysis was completed following grounded theory techniques. After principle investigator analysis in order to assure auditability and reduce potential individual bias, data was analyzed by a review panel composed of a doctoral prepared nurse with expertise in grounded theory research design and a graduate student conducting a qualitative research study. Data saturation was achieved after six interviews (Hanson & Stenvig, 2008).

Results indicated positive clinical educator attribute categories of: educator knowledge, interpersonal presentation, and teaching strategies. Results indicated educator’s current knowledge in theory and clinical practice and the integration of this knowledge into practice for students as an important attribute. Knowledge of the facility and facility functioning was also noted to be of value to students. Another aspect of educator knowledge included the instructor’s knowledge of students and their learning needs and abilities. Students identified interpersonal presentation including the educator’s positive, professional, and supportive attitude as beneficial. Students also discussed encouraging demeanor, organizational skills, and serving as a primary resource as valuable attributes of educators. Managing paperwork, keeping students challenged, and post-conference planning were teaching strategies also identified by students as beneficial (Hanson & Stenvig, 2008).

Hanson and Stenvig (2008) concluded that attributes assigned to good clinical educators were similar to those identified in previous studies. Identification of attributes beneficial to student learning outcomes will be helpful to educators in the development of educator teaching abilities. The authors believe the study reveals a need to examine the
phases of the clinical experience, their interrelationships, and educator strategies to transition through each phase (Hanson & Stenvig, 2008).

**Perceived Importance of the Characteristics of Effective Clinical Instructors**

Benor and Leviyof (1997) also studied students’ perceptions of clinical teacher effectiveness in nursing. Clinical instructors are crucially important for students in learning professional attitudes, values, and norms. The study sought to identify teaching competence and effectiveness in relation to positive student encounters and also to examine differences in perceptions based on school and class. Research focused on the questions:

To what extent students’ perceptions of their clinical teachers’ effectiveness is derived from comparison to a teacher figure with whom the student has had positive encounters and satisfying relationships, and from whom she or he learned a lot. Alternatively, is the ideal teacher’s image independent of any particular teacher, and reflects an ideal image? This study also attempts to look into possible differences in this perception between schools and classes (Benor & Leviyof, 1997, p. 206).

Three Israeli nursing schools participated in the study: a 3 year school offering (RN) degrees, a 4 year school offering a baccalaureate degree (BN), and a 4 year school where students earn a RN degree after 3 years and a BN degree on the 4th (Intensive BN). Questionnaires were distributed to the entire 3rd year classes of all three schools and the 2nd and 4th year classes of the Intensive BN school. The response rate was 84%, n = 123 (Benor & Leviyof, 1997).
The authors used a modified version of the NCTEI describing previously determined positive and negative characteristics of clinical teachers. High reliability of the instrument was confirmed, Alpha was .79 to .89 for each of the five subsets, and substantial test-retest reliability was achieved. Respondents were asked to rank order the five subset characteristics according to personal experience and perception of importance. After rank ordering, respondents were then asked to think of the best instructor they have had so far, as well as the worst instructor they have had so far, and indicate to what extent the instructor possesses or doesn’t possess each of the five characteristics identified by the respondent as important using a 5 point Likert-Type scale. No definitions were provided as to best or poorest (Benor & Leviyof, 1997).

The authors composed a profile of the ideal clinical teaching by weighting the five selected behaviors on the basis of rank order. Students ranked nursing competence (mean = 5.47, SD = 3.6) as the highest attribute for clinical instructor effectiveness. Second in importance was student evaluation with a mean of 4.23 (SD = 3.3). Interpersonal relationships (mean = 2.21, SD = 2.6) ranked third, instructional skills (mean = 2.2, SD = 2.6) ranked forth, and personality (mean = 0.86, SD = 1.6) was lowest. Significant differences were found between the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} year students in all except the personality subsets (Benor & Leviyof, 1997).

While the best teachers scored much higher than the poorest on all characteristics, even the poorest teachers possessed some characteristics which match and sometimes exceed the expectations from an ideal clinical teacher. Likewise, the authors found that the best teachers do not live up to the expectations of the ideal in some categories. The results indicate that nursing competencies are perceived by students as the most important
characteristic of competent clinical teachers while the teacher’s personality traits are ranked as least important. This data agrees with previous research to a certain extent. In comparison with studies using different instruments, professional proficiency is rated as much less important in student perception of ideal clinical instructors. This disagreement may prevent researchers from agreeing on a profile of the effective clinical teacher (Benor & Leviyof, 1997). The authors stressed some questions as to the extent to which the clinical teacher is indeed as powerful a role model as once thought to be. The present study hints that students may integrate several experiences in order to mold their own professional development (Benor & Leviyof, 1997).

Clinical teaching and learning is one of the most important and necessary parts of any educational process in nursing. Kotzabassaki et al., (1997) conducted a survey to identify the distinguishing characteristics of best and worst clinical teachers. The study sought to explore:

…(a) the distinguishing characteristics of the ‘best’ clinical teachers as rated by students and by faculty; (b) the distinguishing characteristics of the ‘worst’ clinical teachers as rated by students and by faculty; and (c) the specific characteristics distinguishing the ‘best’ from the ‘worst’ clinical teachers as rated by students and faculty (Kotzabassaki et al., 1997, p. 818).

Kotzabassaki et al., (1997) also sought to explore the question, “Is there any significant difference between the rating of the students and the rating of the faculty in the five categories of the characteristics of the ‘best’ and ‘worst’ clinical teachers?” (p. 819)
Using a population from the Technological Educational Institution of Athens, the authors collected a convenience sample of 185 nursing students in the fifth and sixth semesters. In order to be included in the sample, each student had been taught by more than seven clinical teachers. Also included in the sample were 31 clinical instructors, 11 having BSN degrees, and six of those with additional teaching methods programs. Of the instructors that did not have a BSN, 12 had attended a specialized teaching course. Eight instructors had only basic nurses training (Kotzabassaki et al., 1997). The authors used the NCTEI in order to collect data on teacher characteristics. The questionnaire consisted of a 48–item checklist describing discrete teaching characteristics which were further divided into five subsets for data analysis. The instrument demonstrated an internal consistency coefficient alpha 0.99, and was also considered to have content and face validity (Kotzabassaki et al., 1997).

Students and faculty agreed on seven out of eleven of the highest rated characteristics of best clinical teachers: enjoys nursing, is a dynamic and energetic person, encourages a climate of mutual respect, answers student questions carefully and precisely, listens attentively, demonstrates clinical skill and judgment, and is organized. Students described the best clinical teacher as a person who enjoys nursing (mean = 6.05, SD = 1.27), is self-confident (mean = 5.91, SD = 1.20), is dynamic and energetic (mean = 5.81, SD = 1.29), encourages a climate of mutual respect (mean = 5.80, SD = 1.44), understands what students are asking (mean = 5.78, SD = 1.16), takes responsibility for their own actions (mean = 5.77, SD = 1.29), answers questions raised by students carefully and precisely (mean = 5.76, SD = 1.23), listens attentively (mean = 5.75, SD =
demonstrates clinical skills and judgment (mean = 5.71, SD = 1.19), is organized
(mean = 5.70, SD = 1.33), and is accessible to students (mean = 5.70, SD = 1.44).

Faculty described the best clinical teacher as a person who listens attentively
(mean = 6.18, SD = 1.23), is organized (mean = 6.06, SD = 1.08), encourages a climate
of mutual respect (mean = 6.03, SD = 1.21), enjoys nursing (mean = 6.00, SD = 1.50),
observes students’ performance (mean = 6.00, SD = 1.29), demonstrates clinical skill and
judgment (mean = 5.97, SD = 1.28), emphasizes what is important (mean = 5.93, SD =
1.27), is a dynamic and energetic person (mean = 5.93, SD = 1.49), demonstrates
communication skills (mean = 5.93, SD = 1.51), answer questions raised by students
carefully and precisely (mean = 5.90, SD = 1.44), and shows a personal interest in
students (mean = 5.90, SD = 1.17) (Kotzabassaki et al., 1997).

Only 4 out of 10 of the lowest rated characteristics were included by both students
and faculty, uses self-criticism constructively, is a good role model, is open-minded and
nonjudgmental, and directs students to useful literature in nursing. Students rated the
worst clinical instructor as someone who is a good role model (mean = 1.94, SD = 1.53),
directs students to useful literature in nursing (mean = 2.20, SD = 1.49), uses self-
criticism constructively (mean = 2.24, SD = 1.48), corrects student’s mistakes without
belittling them (mean = 2.26, SD = 1.69), demonstrates empathy (mean 2.26, SD = 1.53),
provides constructive feedback on student’s performance (mean = 2.29, SD = 1.34),
stimulates student interest in the subject (mean = 2.31, SD = 1.49), is open minded and
nonjudgmental (mean = 2.33, SD = 1.56), provides support and encouragement to
students (mean = 2.35, SD = 1.64), and does not criticize students in front of others
(mean = 2.35, SD = 1.90).
Faculty rated the worst clinical instructor as some who uses self-criticism constructively (mean = 2.41, SD = 1.68), is a good role model (mean = 2.45, SD = 1.87), is open-minded and nonjudgmental (mean = 2.48, SD = 1.69), has a good sense of humor (mean = 2.50, SD = 1.57), questions students to elicit underlying reasoning (mean = 2.61, SD = 1.85), is organized (mean = 2.69, SD = 1.62), has realistic expectations of students (mean = 2.70, SD = 1.64), direct students to useful literature in nursing (mean = 2.71, SD = 1.81), gears instruction to students’ level of readiness (mean = 2.73, SD = 1.68), and reveals broad reading in his/her area of interest (mean = 2.74, SD = 2.08) (Kotzabassaki et al., 1997).

Subset ratings of highest to lowest for students were: interpersonal relationships, nursing competence, teaching ability, personality traits, and evaluation. Faculty’s ratings of the subsets from highest to lowest were: interpersonal relationships, personality traits, teaching ability, evaluation, and nursing competence (Kotzabassaki et al., 1997). Data analysis confirmed that there was no significant difference between students’ and faculty’s perception for the five sub sets of the characteristics of the best and worst clinical teachers. The authors suggest further research is needed to gain insight into role expectations and effectiveness of instructors. It is further suggested that instructors use the NCTEI for self-evaluation and for instructor evaluation by students to improve effectiveness in clinical teaching (Kotzabassaki et al., 1997).

Because the clinical learning experience is a crucial component of nursing education, instructors should strive to improve and increase their teaching effectiveness. Hartland and Londoner (1997) conducted a study to determine the perceived importance of effective clinical anesthesia instructor characteristics identified in previous research,
along with determining any variance between levels of importance between four types of professionals: programs directors, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) clinical instructors, first-year anesthesia students, and second-year nurse anesthesia students. A random sample of faculty and students names was compiled by computer for the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists’ Department of Education and Research. This list created a population of 200 CRNA clinical instructors, 200 students, and all nurse anesthesia program directors from accredited civilian nurse anesthesia programs throughout the United States. The convenience sample consisted of 354 surveys returned by mail and eligible for review (Hartland & Londoner, 1997).

The instrument consisted of a Likert-type questionnaire developed with the assistance of six nationally recognized experts in nurse anesthesia education. Reliability was determined using a test-retest procedure with a resulting 0.66 mean interrater reliability coefficient (Hartland & Londoner, 1997). Students rated 22 previously identified characteristics of effective clinical instructors as somewhat important, important, very important, highly important, and critically important. A rank ordering of importance of the 22 characteristics was compiled for each of the four individual professional groups. Calculation of the Friedman two-way analysis of variance demonstrated there was a high level of consistency between the overall rankings for each professional group (Friedman = 72.869 at P < .000001). A Kendall coefficient of concordance was calculated to estimate the degree of association between the respondents’ rankings. This test demonstrated a very high degree of agreement between the groups concerning the ranking of the characteristics (Kendall = 0.87) (Hartland & Londoner, 1997).
Rank order revealed that “clinical competence/judgment” was the highest rated characteristic with a mean of 4.136, followed by “calm during times of stress” with a mean of 4.105. Further analysis was performed to examine each individual characteristic separately. Chi-square testing for significance was calculated to determine if a relationship existed between professional groups and the values assigned to each characteristic. Characteristics that had a significant chi-square test result included evaluation/counseling (Pearson chi-square = 22.580, df = 9, P statistic = .007), positive role model (Pearson chi-square = 28.480, df = 9, P statistic = .001), flexibility (Pearson chi-square = 15.280, df = 6, P statistic = .018), and timely feedback (Pearson chi-square = 19.190, df = 9, P statistic .024). Program directors had higher mean scores for “evaluation/counseling” than did the clinical instructors and students. Program directors also had higher mean scores for “positive role model” and “timely feedback”. First-year students rated “flexibility” higher than other groups (Hartland & Londoner, 1997).

All respondents of this study perceived all 22 characteristics of effective clinical instructors to be important, supporting previous studies indicating these characteristics to be important attributes of effective clinical instructors. Overall rank ordering was consistent between directors and clinical faculty. The authors stated no surprise to this finding as both groups are actively involved in the clinical teaching process. The study suggests the use of this information as a building block for the improvement of clinical teaching effectiveness by usage as a self-evaluation tool and also as a tool to evaluate instructor effectiveness by peers and students (Hartland & Londoner, 1997).

While it is important to consider the student’s perception of effective characteristics of clinical instructors, it is also important assess educators’ opinions of
what constitutes a good nurse educator. Educators agree that educator competence has a
direct relation to the quality of education of student nurses; therefore, it is important to
examine what comprises a good teacher of nursing. Johnson, Aasgaard, Wahl, and
Salminen (2002) conducted a study to examine the following questions:

What are the most important domains or items in nurse educator competence
based on the opinions of Norwegian nurse educators? What is the relationship
between teachers’ opinions of the importance of nurse educator competence and
teaching practice? What is the relationship between background characteristics,
such as age, level of employment, nursing and teaching experience, and different
domains in nurse educator competence? (p. 296)

All nurse educators in Norway were invited to participate. Of the 828 nurse
educators mailed questionnaires, 348 (42%) returned completed questionnaires creating
the convenience sample. The mean age of participant was 46 years (SD = 7.9) (Johnson,
et al., 2002). The Ideal Nursing Teacher Questionnaire was used to measure nurse
educator competence. The previously developed questionnaire contains 52 statements
concerning the traits and characteristics required to be considered a good nurse educator.
The statements are organized into five categories: nursing competence, teaching skills,
evaluation skills, personality factors, and relationship with students. The questionnaire
asks respondents to rate each characteristic as: 0 – don’t know, 1 – not at all important, 2
– not very important, 3 – important, and 4 – very important. The questionnaire then asks
if the statement applies to the current teaching situation with a yes or no response.
Finally, respondents are asked to choose the three most important characteristics in each
domain. Internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) for the five domains was: Nursing
competence = .76, teaching skills = .76, evaluation skills = .80, personality factors = .74, and relationship with students = .76 (Johnson et al., 2002).

Study findings (mean and confidence interval values) show both teacher competence and nursing competence were rated more important than evaluation skills, personality factors, and relationship with students. “Encouragement of students to combine theory and practice” (mean = 3.89; CI = 3.87 – 3.94) in the nursing competence domain was rated highest. “Encourages students to a critical way of thinking” (mean = 3.72; CI = 3.66 – 3.77) and “enjoys teaching” (mean = 3.76; CI = 3.66 – 3.77) were the highest rated characteristics in the teaching skills domain. In the personality factor domain “awareness of own strengths and weaknesses” (mean = 3.69; CI = 3.63 – 3.75) and “is prepared to admit mistakes” (mean = 3.65; CI = 3.58 – 3.70) were rated the highest importance. “Allows free discussion” (mean = 3.74; CI 3.68 – 3.78), “encourages mutual respect” (mean = 3.78; CI = 3.73 – 3.82), and “is encouraging” (mean = 3.68; CI 3.63 – 3.73) were given the highest ratings in the relationship with students domain (Johnson et al., 2002).

Teacher competence and nursing competence were rated more important than evaluation skills, personality factors, and relationship with students. Results showed many educators focused on teaching and have little regard for practical skills. Some pointed to a need to stay up to date on skills, but lacked resources in doing so. Educators with more experience in education reported the relationship with students as more important than those with shorter careers in education (Johnson et al., 2002). Possible pressure to be both academically and clinically credible may be a cause for conflict in an educator’s role with the integration of theory and practice. Johnson et al. (2002) suggest
that further investigation and debate concerning the congruence between curriculum plan, nurse educator competence, and teaching practice is recommended.

Clinical teaching is vital for development of student nurses; however, criteria for effective clinical teachers are undefined and often unreliable. Lee, Cholowski, and Williams (2002) conducted a study to explore the perceived characteristics of effective clinical educators as rated by students and educators, and the significant differences and commonalities between these perceptions. Research questions were:

What are the characteristics of effective clinical educators as rated by students?
What are the characteristics of effective clinical educators as rated by clinical educators? What are the significant differences and commonalities between students’ and clinical educators’ perceptions of characteristics of effective clinical educators? What are the differences between demographic details of students and their perceptions of characteristics of effective clinical educators; and, What are the differences between demographic details of clinical educators and their perceptions of characteristics of effective clinical educators? (Lee et al., 2002, p. 415)

The study population consisted of full time equivalent undergraduate students in a regional university in Australia. Questionnaires were distributed to 150 second year students, 112 third year students and 34 clinical educators. The convenience sample of 104 (69.3%) second year students and 17 (50%) clinical educators was taken from returned questionnaires. Third year student response was low (30 or 26.8%) and a decision was made to exclude this group. Student mean age was 24 years with half (51%) aged between 18 and 20 years and half (49%) aged between 21 and 50 years. Of
the 17 educators, 14 had nursing qualifications from a university school of nursing and six had post graduate qualifications with one having a Master of Nursing. Most clinical educators were inexperienced in their role with 12 reporting less than 12 months teaching experience (Lee et al., 2002).

The authors used the NCTEI 48-item checklist that describes teacher characteristics grouped into five sub categories: teaching ability, nursing competence, personality traits, interpersonal relationship and evaluation. Respondents indicate on a five point Likert-type scale how descriptive a specific characteristic is of a particular teacher. High scores indicate positive characteristics for the teacher being evaluated. The instrument was found to be internally consistent (Cronbach’s $\alpha$ ranged from 0.79 to 0.92), was stable over time (test-retest scores at 4-week intervals ranged from 1.76 to 0.93 utilizing Person’s correlation), and was considered to have content and face validity (Lee et al., 2002).

Data analysis confirmed no statistically significant difference between student and clinical educator perceptions of characteristics of effective clinical educators. Students and clinical educators were consistent in the ranking of the top ten highest rated characteristics. Students rated interpersonal relationships highest (mean = 4.15, SD = 0.77), evaluation second (mean = 4.11, SD = 0.82), nursing competence third (mean = 4.08, SD = 0.87), teaching ability forth (mean = 4.05, SD = 0.78), and personality traits fifth (mean = 4.02, SD = 0.87). Similarly, clinical educators rated interpersonal relationship highest (mean = 4.13, SD = 0.80), however nursing competence was rated second (mean = 4.10, SD = 0.74), evaluation third (mean = 4.08, SD = 0.87), teaching
ability forth (mean = 4.00, SD = 0.67), and personality traits fifth (mean = 3.93, SD = 0.74) (Lee et al., 2002).

Similar to previous studies, the study revealed younger students between 18 and 20 years ranked interpersonal relationships higher than the more mature students. Also similar to previous research, the study found that interpersonal relationships were ranked as the highest subset by both students and clinical educators. The study also found demographic differences related to age. Older students, especially those with previous nursing experience, emphasized the need for performance feedback along with objective analysis of their limitations and strengths. Unlike younger students, the older students were not concerned with the manner in which feedback was delivered. Younger students appear to be more sensitive to criticism, thus giving feedback a lower rating (Lee et al., 2002). The authors suggest that greater emphasis be given to teaching ability. Clinical educators must be aware of the advantages of using different teaching strategies adapted to student age and prior experience (Lee et al., 2002).

Summary

Clinical rotation accounts for a significant portion of nursing education. Several studies (Benor & Leviyof, 1997; Gignac-Caille & Oermann, 2001; Hanson & Stenvig, 2008; Kotzabassaki et al., 1997; Lee et al., 2002) concur that these clinical experiences are crucial in the development of competent, skillful, and caring nurses. Johnson et al. (2002) adds that the relationship between clinical teacher and student impacts student confidence in their role as a nurse. Because clinical faculty have a pivotal role in the education and development of nursing students, exploration of effective characteristics is useful in providing positive student outcomes during clinical learning experiences. This
literature review explored the research evidence on characteristics of clinical faculty that are most beneficial to student learning outcomes.

The twelve studies reviewed examined aspects of clinical faculty characteristics; three studies (Berg & Lindseth, 2004; Kelly, 2006; Sieh & Bell, 1994) identify the characteristics used by clinical instructors that prove to be effective in student learning. Research in four descriptive studies (Gignac-Caille & Oermann, 2001; Hanson & Stenvig, 2008; Tang et al., 2005; Wolf et al., 2004) explore the characteristics of effective clinical instructors to provide insight on student and faculty definition of terms and concepts. Clinical competence, educator knowledge, teaching strategies, and instructional skills are among the attributes rated as highly important for effective instruction. Benor and Leviyof (1997), Hartland and Londoner (1997), Johnson et al. (2002), Kotzabassaki et al. (1997), and Lee et al. (2002) expand of the definitions by providing insight into student and faculty perceived importance and providing a rank order of the identified characteristics.

Participants in the twelve studies reviewed consisted of nursing students, recently graduated practicing nurses, and faculty members. Two studies (Hanson & Stenvig, 2008; Kelly, 2006) used face-to-face interviews along with open-ended questions to determine participants’ descriptions of clinical educator attributes and experiences. Benor and Leviyof (1997), Gignac-Caille and Oermann (2001), Hartland and Londoner (1997), Kotzabassaki et al., (1997), Lee et al., (2002) and Sieh and Bell (1994) utilized the NCTEI consisting of a Likert-type questionnaire to rank previously identified characteristics. Based on review of research of this topic many investigators believe there is a consensus of ranking the most important clinical faculty characteristics;
however, more research is needed to clarify the characteristics of clinical faculty that are most beneficial to student learning outcomes.

In addition, review of the twelve articles indicates a need for an instrument to evaluate teaching effectiveness in the clinical area. Continued evaluation of clinical faculty is important for accountability and growth (Tang et al., 2005). Review of teaching strategies and education for formal teaching methods will prove helpful to novice, as well as experienced, educators in providing quality clinical education experiences (Wolf et al., 2004).
Chapter III

Methods and Procedures

Introduction

The clinical component of nursing education is essential in preparing students to be competent and skillful practitioners. Clinical instructors have an important role in the education and in the development of nursing students. Instructor characteristics that have a positive effect on student outcomes must be identified and utilized. Exploration of effective characteristics of clinical instructors provides insight into improvement of educational programs for developing nurses. This study is a partial replication of Gignac-Caille and Oermann’s (2001) study which utilized a descriptive approach to determine perceived importance of characteristics of clinical instructors. This chapter contains a description of the methods and procedures that will be used in this study.

Purpose

The purpose of this descriptive study is to explore the perceptions of characteristics of clinical instructors which are most beneficial to student learning outcomes.

Research Questions

1. What do ADN students and faculty perceive as important characteristics of effective clinical instructors?
2. Are there differences in ADN students’ and faculty’s perceptions of characteristics of effective clinical instructors?

Population, Sample, and Setting

The population is all ADN students enrolled in Midwestern nursing schools. The sample for this study will consist of an anticipated convenience sample of 200 nursing students in various levels of their ADN programs and 50 faculty members from the same programs recruited from three Midwestern schools of nursing. Inclusion criteria are students who are enrolled in either full or part time status and actively participating in clinical classes. Faculty will include full time and part time status employment.

Protection of Human Subjects

This study will be submitted to the Ball State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), and the Institutional Review Board of the three Midwestern college Schools of Nursing. The rights of the subjects will be protected at all times. Participation will be strictly voluntary with implied consent assumed with return of the completed questionnaires. No names will be used for data collection. There are no risks identified for being included in this study. Benefits from this study will include identification of characteristics of clinical faculty which are effective to student learning outcomes in the clinical setting. Findings about characteristics of those in instructional roles will be of value in devising a valid and reliable evaluation tool to assess the effectiveness of clinical teachers. Permission to use the instrument will be obtained from the authors.

Procedure

After receiving IRB approval, the research project will be submitted to the randomly selected schools of nursing for review and approval. The study time
parameters of return of questionnaires for inclusion will be established. The proposal which includes the purpose of the study, subject confidentiality, risks, benefits, and voluntary participation will be presented to the directors or deans of the three randomly selected schools of nursing. The directors, deans, or designated individuals will distribute research packets to willing participants. The research packets consist of the instrument, a cover letter with an explanation of the study, and a self-addressed stamped envelope to return the instrument to the researcher. Student questionnaire packets will be distributed by individual faculty during class lecture. Faculty questionnaire packets will be distributed by student volunteer to each faculty’s school mailbox.

Research Design

The study will employ a descriptive exploratory design with a self-reporting questionnaire. Descriptive study designs are useful to gain additional information about characteristics within a particular area of study (Burns & Grove, 2005). No manipulation of variables will be involved. The study will focus on characteristics of effective clinical instructors as perceived by ADN students and faculty.

Instrumentation, Reliability, and Validity

The instrument to be used in this study will be the Nursing Clinical Teacher Effectiveness Inventory (NCTEI) developed by Knox and Mogan (1985). The NCTEI consists of 48 important instructor characteristics divided into five sub-scales. The sub-scales are teaching ability, interpersonal relationships, personality, nursing competence, and evaluation. A five point, Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never important) to 5 (always important) will be used to assess respondents’ perceived level of importance of each clinical instructor characteristic.
Validity and reliability of the NCTEI in the original study were established using the total scale alpha coefficient. At the time of pilot testing, the NCTEI was administered to 688 subjects with reliability coefficients ranging from $\alpha = .20$ to .92. Alpha coefficients also were obtained by Knox and Mogan (1987) on each of the sub-scales: Teaching, $\alpha = .89$; Nursing competence, $\alpha = .84$; Evaluation, $\alpha = .82$; Interpersonal relationships, $\alpha = .86$; Personality, $\alpha = .83$ (Gignac-Caille & Oermann, 2001).

Reliability of individual items, in the original study, ranged from $\alpha = .79$ for is a dynamic energetic person to $\alpha = .88$ for emphasizes what is important. Test-retest reliability estimates at 4 weeks ranged from $r = .76$ to .93. Reliability estimates were established for each subscale with reliability coefficients establishing test–retest reliability (Gignac-Caille & Oermann, 2001).

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics will be used to analyze study variables and to determine which characteristics students and faculty perceive as important in order for clinical instructors to be effective. The 48 teaching behaviors will be ranked on a five-point scale from 1 (never important) to 5 (always important). Mean scores will be calculated for each behavior. In mean scores, higher scores will imply more effective characteristics and lower scores will imply less effective characteristics. A simple comparison of means across scores will be used to examine the ranked scores from perceptions of characteristics of each item against the categorized five main subscales of: Teaching ability, interpersonal relationship, personality traits, nursing competence, and evaluation. Category scores will be obtained by summing scores of all items within a category. Summing all five category scores will provide a total score for the effective clinical
instructor. T-tests will be used to determine if the differences between students and faculty are statistically significant. Significance level of 5%, probability value = 0.05, will be used for these tests.

Summary

In this chapter, the methods and procedures to be used to determine the effective characteristics of clinical instructors are discussed. The purpose of this descriptive study is to explore the perceptions of characteristics of clinical instructors which are most beneficial to student learning outcomes. Using the NCTEI questionnaire, data will be collected from a convenience sample of 200 nursing students in various levels of their ADN programs and 50 faculty members from the same programs from three Midwestern college Schools of Nursing. The data will be analyzed with descriptive statistics and correlational analyses using the 0.05 significance level. This study is a replication of a previous study by Cognac-Caille and Oermann (2001) and attempt to validate previous findings while providing further information into exploration of effective characteristics of clinical instructors to provide insight into improvement of educational programs for developing nurses.
References


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| Gignac-Caille, A. and Oermann, M. (2001) | Clinical instructors have important role in development of student nurses | Examine characteristics of effective clinical instructors as identified by students and faculty. Examine the differences of importance between students and faculty. | • What do ADN students and faculty perceive as important characteristics of effective clinical instructors?  
• Are there differences in AND students' and faculty's perceptions of characteristics of effective clinical instructors? | No framework noted. Concept of clinical instruction/teaching. | • Five randomly selected ADN programs in Michigan.  
• Convenience Sample of:  
• 292 students in various levels of program  
• 59 nursing faculty  
• 30 Full time  
• 29 Part time | • Descriptive  
• NCTEI | Students identified “demonstrates clinical skill and judgment” as most important. Faculty identified “explains clearly” and “is well prepared for teaching” as most important. Both groups stated “directs students to useful literature in nursing” as least important. | Clinically competent instructors are needed. Would be beneficial to study larger number of part-time faculty as most school employ large numbers of part-time faculty. |
| Benor, D., and Leviyof, I. (1997) | Clinical instructors are crucially important in learning professional attitudes, values, and norms. | Identify teaching competence and effectiveness in relation to positive student encounters. Examine differences in perceptions based on school and class. | • To what extent is student perception of clinical teacher effectiveness derived from comparison to a teacher figure with whom the student has had positive encounters and satisfying relationship, and from whom she or he learned a lot.  
• Is the teacher’s image independent of any particular teacher, and reflects an ideal image?  
• Are there possible differences in perceptions between school and classes? | No framework noted. Concept of clinical teaching | • Three Israeli nursing schools  
• 3 year school offering (RN) degrees  
• 4 year school offering baccalaureate degree (BN)  
• 4 year school where student earn a RN degree after 3 years and a BN degree on the 4th (Intensive BN) | • Descriptive  
• NCTEI | Subsets in order of importance were:  
• Nursing competencies  
• Student evaluation  
• Interpersonal relationships  
• Instructional skills  
• Personality | Research disagreement may prevent the emergence of an agreed upon profile of an effective clinical teacher.  
Further study to define creation of student perception of an ideal clinical teacher. |
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<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<td>Berg, C., and Lindseth, G. (2004)</td>
<td>Student perception of clinical educators is used to assess teacher effectiveness. Students develop opinions early of effectiveness.</td>
<td>• What characteristics students describe as effective and ineffective of clinical and theory instructors.</td>
<td>No framework noted. Concept of clinical and theory instruction/teaching.</td>
<td>• University in the Midwestern United States • Convenience Sample of: • 171 students in the baccalaureate nursing program - 48 sophomore • 51 junior • 72 senior</td>
<td>• Descriptive • Investigator designed with 3 parts: 1) demographic information, 2) two open ended questions to identify characteristics used to label instructors as effective or ineffective, &amp; 3) two questions about the grading techniques and individual coursework. Top characteristics of effective instructors identified by all three groups: personality, teaching method, and presentation. Marked differences between groups for perceived importance of remaining characteristics.</td>
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<td>Hanson, K., and Stenvig, T. (2008)</td>
<td>Student learning and performance in clinical experience reflect the educator's ability to create an environment in which the student can learn.</td>
<td>• What clinical educator attributes do recent baccalaureate degree nursing graduates perceive as the attributes that 'best' prepared them to become nurses?</td>
<td>In this study, elements of the following theories: • Cognitive Field Theory, • Humanistic Philosophy of Teaching and Learning, • Gestalt Theory of Learning and • Hergenhahn's Behavioral Change Theory were used to develop the research questions, designing the study approach using grounded theory methods, and comparing study findings with results of earlier studies.</td>
<td>• Pool of graduates of two BSN programs in South Dakota • Names from graduation bulletins were cross-matched with names of RNs on BON nursing lists. Invitation letters were mailed to 65 potential participants with instructions to contact the principal investigator. Six participants were interviewed. Face to face interviewing, including open-ended questions asking participants to describe perceptions of clinical educator attributes and experiences. Data analysis followed grounded theory techniques.</td>
<td>Positive clinical educator attribute categories revealed during data analysis included: --Educator knowledge --interpersonal presentation --teaching strategies Results will be helpful to novice, as well as experienced, educators in the development of educator teaching abilities. Further research to examine what kind of paper lesion will offer the best learning opportunity.</td>
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<td>Hartland, W., and Londoner, C. (1997)</td>
<td>Because the clinical component of education is critically important in the education of</td>
<td>Determine the perceived importance of the effective clinical anesthesia instructor</td>
<td>• What is the perceived level of importance of previously determined characteristics of effective clinical Clinical Teaching Faculty Development Faculty Characteristics</td>
<td>• Accredited civilian nurse anesthesia programs throughout the United States. • The random sample of faculty and student names were generated by computer and • 5 point Likert-Type questionnaire based on Katz's research. Reliability</td>
<td>A rank ordering of importance for the 22 characteristics was compiled. All 22 characteristics were perceived to be very important or highly Use the study as a building block for improvement of clinical teaching effectiveness. Design instruments for self evaluation by</td>
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nurse anesthesia students, clinical instructors must endeavor to increase their teaching effectiveness.

| Characteristics as identified by Katz in 1982. Determine if these perceived levels of importance varied between four types of professionals, namely, nurse anesthesia program directors, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) clinical instructors, first-year nurse anesthesia students, and second-year nurse anesthesia students in relation to various demographic factors. | Instructors? • Do these perceived levels of importance varied between for types of professionals: a. Nurse anesthesia program directors b. Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist clinical instructors c. first year nurse anesthesia students d. second year anesthesia students | Provided by the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists’ Department of Education and Research. • Convenience sample consisted of 200 CRNA clinical faculty members, 200 first-year and second-year nurse anesthesia students and all nurse anesthesia program directors | Determined using test-retest procedure with 0.66 mean interrater reliability coefficient. | Important.


| No framework noted. Concept of educator self-evaluation. Teaching/Learning | All nurse educators in Norway = 828 • 348 returned (42%) Mean age was 46 years (SD = 7.9) | • Exploratory/Descriptive • Ideal Nursing Teacher Questionnaire | Teacher competence and nursing competence rated more important than evaluation skills, personality factors, and relationship with students. Results showed many educators shows little regard for practical skills and focused on teaching. Some pointed to a need to stay up to date on skills but lacked resources in doing so. Educators with more experience in education report the relationship with students as more important than those with shorter experience. Educators or evaluation of the instructor by peers and students. | Norway is moving to academia in nursing and educators are pressured to be both academically and clinically competent. Further investigation and debate concerning the congruence between curriculum plan, nurse educator competence, and teaching practice is recommended. |
### Kelly, C. (207)

Despite a wealth of research on clinical teaching, the criteria for determining what constitutes effective clinical teaching remain poorly defined.

Use a generative approach to compare how second and third year nursing students view effective clinical teaching in diploma and baccalaureate programs.

| • What teacher characteristics and contextual influences impact students in clinical settings. |
| Convenience sample consisted of 30 students at the end of second and third years volunteered to be interviewed in-depth for each study. The first study was conducted in a diploma program, whereas in the second study all but a few students were elected to complete a four year baccalaureate nursing degree. |
| Descriptive/Exploratory |
| Three questions: |
| • Tell me about the most effective clinical teacher you have had to date (no names please). I need a detailed description of what made that teacher effective for you. |
| • What three qualities do you believe are most important for teaching effectively in clinical settings? Please rank order those. |
| • In addition to what you have shared with me so far, is there anything else that influences (enhances or detracts from) your learning in the clinical area? |

Findings with these two studies concur with earlier findings that nursing student's perceptions of effective clinical teach are contingent on the teacher's clinical competence, communication and feedback skills. The work highlights the importance of teacher knowledge in four areas: as it pertains to the clinical area, the curriculum, the learner and pedagogy. Study implies that trend toward temporary employment of clinical teachers is unsound. Further studies should include teacher ratios, length of employment, teacher qualification, preparation and experience, contractual limitations, and staff's acceptance of students.

### Kotzabassaki, S., Panou, M.,

Clinical teaching and learning is

Replicate the study done by

| • What are the characteristics of |
| No framework noted. |
| • Technological Educational Institution of Athens |
| • Descriptive |

Students top rated: enjoys nursing

First Greek study to be done.
| Dimou, F., Karabagli, A., Koutsopoulou, B., and Ikonomou, U. (1997) | one of the most important and necessary parts of any educational process in nursing.  
the best clinical teachers as rated by students and faculty?  
• What are the distinguishing characteristics of the worst clinical teachers as rated by students and by faculty?  
• Is there any difference between the rating of the students and the rating of the faculty in the five categories of the characteristics of the best and worst clinical teachers?  

| Concept of quality assurance  
Clinical instruction | • 185 students in fifth and sixth semester that had been taught by more than seven clinical teachers  
• 31 clinical instructors with 11 having BSN degrees and 6 of those with additional teaching methods programs. 12 did not have a BSN but had attended a specialized teaching course. 8 only had basic nurses training.  
• Convenience | • NCTEI  
• is self confident  
• is a dynamic, energetic person  
• encourages a climate of mutual respect  


Faculty top rated:  
• Listens attentively  
• is organized  
• encourages climate of mutual respect  
• enjoys nursing  

No significant difference between student and faculty perceptions  
Further research needed to gain insight on role and effectiveness of instructors.  
Instructors should use NCTEI for self-evaluation and for evaluation by students to improve effectiveness. |
| Lee, W., Cholowski, K., and Williams, K. (2002) | Clinical teaching is vital for development of student nurses. Criteria for effective clinical teachers are undefined and often unreliable.  
Explore the perceived characteristics of effective clinical educators as rated by students and educators, and the significant differences and commonalities between these perceptions.  
• What are the characteristics of effective clinical educators as rated by students?  
• What are the characteristics of effective clinical educators as rated by clinical educators?  
• What are the significant differences and commonalities between students’ and clinical educators’ perceptions of characteristics of effective clinical educators?  
• What are the differences between demographic characteristics of effective clinical educators?  

| No framework noted.  
Concept of clinical teaching/instruction. | • Regional University in Australia  
Questionnaire to:  
• 150 second year students – 104 received (69.3%)  
• 112 third year students – 30 received (26.8%)  
• 34 clinical educators – 17 received (50%)  

Of the 17 educators, 14 had nursing qualifications from a university school of nursing. 6 had post graduate qualifications with one having a Master of Nursing. Clinical educators – 12 had less than 12 months teaching experience.  
Third year students excluded due to low response rate. | • Descriptive  
• NCTEI  
No significant differences between student and faculty perceptions.  
Rank order of subsets:  
• Interpersonal relationships  
• Evaluation  
• Nursing competence  
• Teaching ability  
• Personality traits  

Students highest rated: good role models  
Faculty highest rated: enjoyed nursing  
Differences in age groups – younger ranked evaluation higher.  
Greater emphasis should be on teacher ability. Teachers must use a variety of strategies and adapt material to prior experience.  
Teacher effectiveness should be monitored nationally in Australia. |
| Sieh, S., and Bell, S. (1994) | Clinical as well as classroom teacher effectiveness can affect student outcomes. | Identify important characteristics of effective clinical teachers at the associate degree level. | • What do associate degree nursing students perceive as important characteristics of effective clinical teachers?  
• What does associate degree nursing faculty perceive as important characteristics of effective clinical teachers?  
• Are there differences in what associate degree nursing students and associate degree nursing faculty perceive as important characteristics of effective clinical teachers?  
• Do associate degree nursing students’ perceptions become more similar to faculty perceptions as they progressed through the program? | No framework noted. Concept of clinical teaching. | • Two southwestern community colleges  
• Convenience sample of:  
  • 199 Nursing students  
  • 22 Faculty | Descriptive NCTEI | Students rated “Corrects students’ mistakes without belittling them” as highest.  
Faculty rated “encourages a climate of mutual respect” as highest.  
No significant difference was found between faculty and students.  
Student perceptions did not become more similar to faculty as they progressed through the program. | Study could be used to construct an evaluation tool for teacher effectiveness. Use by educators to evaluate and improve their own teaching methods. |
| Tang, F., Chou, S., and Chiang, H. (2005) | Nursing instructors are responsible for ensuring that students learn how to apply theory, gain hand on experience, practice techniques, and develop into mature nurses. | Clinical nursing faculty possess four categories of important qualities: professional competence, interpersonal relationship, personality characteristics, and teaching ability. The purpose was to understand of these four categories of qualities, which taken together, was the main contributor to effective clinical nursing faculty. | •What are the characteristics of effective and ineffective clinical teachers? •What are the differences between effective and ineffective clinical teachers? •Do students at different schools have the same opinions about what constitutes effective and ineffective clinical teachers? | No framework noted. Concept of clinical teaching ability. Concept of caring | •Two nursing schools in Taiwan n = 235 •Convenience sample •One private n = 162 •One public n = 52 | •Descriptive | Effective •Solves problems with students •has sufficient professional knowledge •is a role model for students Ineffective •avoids subjectively judging students •Is empathetic toward students •Endures students' mistakes and avoids scolding | No framework noted. Concept of clinical teaching ability. | Effective teachers possess qualities form all four categories. Largest difference is interpersonal relationships category. Study shows largest number of ineffective teaching behaviors involve violation of respect for students. Use study to become more empathetic and allow them to be more tolerant of students inadequacies. |

| Wolf, Z., Bender, P., Beitz, J., Wieland, D., and Vito, K. (2004) | Peer, self, administrative, and student evaluations along with student outcomes are frequently used to document faculty teaching performance and effectiveness. | Describe the patterns and themes representing strengths and weaknesses in faculty teaching performance as reported by undergraduate and graduate nursing students. | What do undergraduate and graduate students perceive as faculty teaching strengths and weaknesses. | No framework noted. Concept of student evaluation of teaching performance. | •Undergraduate and graduate students at a private, urban, religiously affiliated university. •300 = 53 •400 = 97 •500 = 37 •600 = 127 | •Descriptive •Qualitative | Undergraduates: Strengths – teaching strategies, faculty enthusiasm and knowledge base, faculty support of student efforts, clear organized courses. Weaknesses: Critical of teaching performance, disorganization, need for greater clarity. Graduates: Strengths: faculty knowledge, flexibility Weaknesses: need more feedback and consistency | Faculty that lack confidence are considered weak instructors. Need for expert and seasoned teachers for basic students. Need for formal teaching methods education. |