Effectiveness education: A content analysis of key experiences of teachers' about quality of evaluation and applied knowledge in nursing education

ABSTRACT

Any shortcomings and deficiencies in training are impacted on clinical knowledge and skills directly and to be professional and on community health eventually too. The aim of study was to explore the comprehension and experiences of Iranian nursing teachers regarding efficient education process in both classroom and clinical setting. Experiences of 28 educators through in-depth semi-structured interviews were collected and analyzed using content analysis method. Constant comparison method was used in order to perform qualitative analysis. Accuracy and consistency of study was obtained with regard to the four axes of real value, applicability, continuity, and fact-based. During the data analysis, three main themes emerged: Participatory Evaluation, effective educator, Applied Knowledge. Our study findings showed a gap between what Iranian nursing teachers depicted as a fair and equitable efficient education and what they experienced during their career. So, Effective training is required to achieve effective implementation in practice and to become professional. It depends on teacher professional competency, accurate and objective assessment. It leads to acquire applicable knowledge and will be applied to practice by learner. The results of this study are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the ability of teacher in vocational education to function effectively. In this study, we discovered that applied Knowledge and accuracy evaluation can play a critical role in change traditionally taught nursing education programs and for students' increased confidence in their impact on patient care outcome. Managers can schedule training with an emphasis on the experiences of nursing teachers and students to identify weaknesses in the education process.

Key words: Nursing educator, effectiveness education, content analysis, qualitative study, experience, professional.

INTRODUCTION

The aims of nursing education principally centre on the transmission of nursing knowledge, and assisting nursing students to acquire the necessary skills and attitudes associated with nursing practice. As with professional preparation generally, nursing education encompasses the three domains of learning, the cognitive, the affective, and the psychomotor (Salsali et al., 2009). Nurse educators are charged with ensuring that graduates are well prepared to function in the context of an ever-evolving and increasingly complex health care environment. Professional consultation
and collaboration skills have been identified as necessary for the advanced practice nurse, yet teaching such skills can be a challenge (Duffy et al., 2011). Today one of the greatest challenges facing individual academics of nursing is trying to cope with all problems they met in teaching process in higher education. Nurses are faced with increased patient acuity, advances in technology and changes in their roles and responsibilities (Beitzanice et al., 2005). For this reason, they need to question themselves by the way considering and practicing about what constitutes “good teaching” for academics and “good learning” for student in nursing education (Barnett et al., 2010). The educational preparation of nurses must provide the necessary skills and foundation for graduates to practice at a basic level of competency and safety ((AACN), 1998, (AACN), 2008). The clinical instructional experiences during the academic program should prepare students for entry into practice and provide learning opportunities that aid in the transition to the professional role (Billings, 2009). Nursing education provides nurses with training courses to acquire specialized competencies in various fields. Competency includes three main areas of significance for nurses: nursing theory and practice; research, development and education; and leadership/management (Dellai et al., 2009). Therefore, teachers need to establish their unique role which must lie in showing how academic knowledge can be integrated and applied to nursing practice (Elahi et al., 2012a). However, if nurse teachers do not maintain their clinical ability they will not be able to support their claim to do this, and not only will the practice-theory divide increase, but in the very near future nurse teachers will find it extremely difficult to justify their existence (Dekker-Groen et al., 2011).

A review of the literature revealed that the effectiveness of instruction in baccalaureate nursing programs has not been adequately addressed in light of the changing health care environment. So Teacher effectiveness is more difficult to evaluate in diverse, often fast paced, highly complex clinical settings, than in more controlled environments such as seminars, laboratories and classrooms (Salsali et al., 2009).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the comprehension and experiences of Iranian nursing teachers regarding effective education in theoretical and clinical setting based on their socio-cultural perspective. This description adds to the richness of the published literature on the nursing profession cross-nationally.

**Background nursing educator in Iran**

In Iran, nurse educator is Master or PhD of nursing. The aim of the Master of Nursing program is to prepare competent nurses who are able to act as nurse educators, conduct clinical research and manage health care delivery setting. Therefore, in contrast to the western countries, many Master of nursing graduates prefer to pursue careers in the academe rather than service sector. The aim of the Master of Nursing programmers is to prepare competent nurses who are able to act as nurse educators, conduct clinical research and manage health care delivery in different settings. Master of Nursing curricula focus mainly on educational units rather than practical units (Nikbakht et al., 2004).

Master of Nursing graduates are employed mostly within nursing school faculties, and many of the new graduates who work in clinical areas, do so only because the academic positions have been filled by those who previously graduated. Many nursing managers allege that the current focus on educational courses in Master of Nursing programs rarely prepare students to be good clinicians (Tabari and Deans, 2007).

The purpose of the doctoral program is to prepare graduates for a lifetime of intellectual inquiry and creative scholarship and research, and to further the extension of nursing knowledge in Iran. Graduates from the programs are expected to be knowledgeable professionals who are able to provide invaluable insights into nursing issues, thereby improving the nursing care status in the health care system (Nikbakht et al., 2004).

Whilst the trend to extend nursing education via an expansion in the number of university departments of nursing and an increase in the number of master’s and doctorate nursing programs is exciting, the downside is that it may actually devalues nursing degrees (Tabari and Deans, 2007).

**METHODOLOGY**

**Design**

This qualitative study was a part of an extensive investigation about efficient education in nursing by using conventional content analysis approach. Qualitative content analysis is the analysis of the content of narrative data, and it is a flexible method to identify prominent subthemes and patterns among themes (Elo and Kyngas, 2008; Polit and Beck, 2008). At the conditions of lack of enough knowledge about a phenomenon (such as efficient education in nursing) or knowledge fragmentation, the inductive approach is recommended (Elo and Kyngas, 2008) in order to explain and interpret the data and elaborate the dominant and major themes of participants’ experiences (Granheim and Lundman, 2003).

**Setting and participants**

The study was carried out in 2011 in Iran. We aimed to
explore how effective education that conducted educators' teaching practices. The participants were selected by purposeful sampling. They were registered educators; (22 females and 6 males). Data gathering was done in Iran faculties of nursing to saturation. The interview was carried out in free and relaxed environment according to educators' preferences (in faculty).

Data collection

Unstructured interviews were conducted as the data gathering tool. The interviews covered the teachers' experiences about the effectiveness education employed to encounter it in nursing practice and theory. The major foci of the questions were "how do you teach in classroom and clinical setting for "good education "and what factors impact for gaining effectiveness in education. The interviews lasted between one and half an hour in average. Some participants were interviewed twice, (in two separate parts, in order to improve the depth of data gathering). It means that according to the findings, the next interview was carried out to the point of completing the data. The total number of participants was 28 educators, but totally, 32 interviews were performed. The majority of them (45%) aged between 32 and 45 years old. They had the experience of working as educator from 3 to 29 years in different faculties. The maximum variation of sampling was considered with the participants' gender, age, nursing experiences and place of work. The interviews were subsequently transcribed, read, re-read, and analyzed by the team of researchers.

Rigor

The criteria of credibility, applicability, consistency and neutrality were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Chiovitti and Piran, 2003). To ensure credibility, the analysed results were explained to participants in order to make sure that the participants' intentions and feelings were fully understood by the researchers. For applicability, researchers interviewed until data were fully saturated. And, in order to enhance consistency, the results were reviewed by two professors of nursing who have experience in qualitative research studies. To keep neutrality, the researchers tried to maximize objectivity about participants as well as their experiences.

Data analysis

The interviews were recorded on tapes. The interviews were subsequently transcribed, read, reread, and analyzed by the research team. The overt and covert messages and transcribed texts were analyzed by qualitative content analysis approach. The approach focuses on subject and context, differences and similarities within categories and themes (Granheim and Lundman, 2003). Inductive content analysis was made in different steps. At first, the content of each interview (the text) was repeatedly read to obtain an overall understanding of the data and to gain ideas for further analysis. Then all the texts were divided into meaning units (each one containing several words, sentences and phrases) related to the aim. Then the meaning units were condensed into open coding (Desantis and Doris, 2000, Granheim and Lundman, 2003). The data was organized in the next step. This process included open coding [notes and headings were written in the text while reading it (extracted from meaning units)], and creating categories and themes. The written text was read through again, and as many headings as necessary were written down in the margins to describe all aspects of the content. The headings were collected from the margins onto coding sheets and categories were generated at this stage (Elo and Kyngas, 2008). The lists of categories were grouped under higher order headings. Categories were grouped as main categories or themes. The purpose of creating categories was to provide a means of describing the phenomenon, to increase understanding and to generate knowledge (Elo and Kyngas, 2008, Polit et al., 2010). At this stage, we obtained 11 sub-themes and three final themes. All researchers were engaged in the process of analyzing and synthesizing the data. Throughout the entire analysis process, subcategories, categories and themes were compared with the original texts until consensus among all authors was attained. Therefore, the total process of analysis was briefly carried out as transcribing each interview, and dividing it into meaning units, open coding, subcategories and themes.

Ethical considerations

The study was approved by the research council of Medical Sciences Faculty, Tarbiat Modares University, which corroborated its ethical consideration. The study ethical considerations were anonymity, informed consent, withdrawal from the study, and recording permission. Prior to the study, the nurses were informed verbally about the aim of the study. It was mentioned that they could withdraw from the study at any time without being penalized. Then informed consent was obtained from the nurses who willingly participated in the study. To protect the privacy, confidentiality and the identity of the participants, interviews were conducted only with the participation of the interviewer and the interviewee.

RESULTS

The data analysis resulted in three main themes. Themes
were not mutually exclusive or independent, but rather overlapping and intertwined. The themes and their related categories summarized the nursing teachers’ experiences of effectiveness education situations and the way they used to present efficacious training and meet students’ needs in spite of being immersed in good education. Given below is the meaning of each theme explained using the participants’ direct quotations.

**Participatory evaluation**

Participatory evaluation is one of the themes of this study. A significant core effectiveness of teaching is evaluation. This theme includes three sub-themes, self assessment, peer assessment and feedback. This is a rather complex skill because it necessitates collecting and analyzing knowledge regarding students’ varying abilities, and transforming this knowledge into an evaluation that is objective and yet meaningful to students in accordance with both learning goals and standards of practice.

**Self evaluation**

The participatory approach is very much action-oriented that the educational stakeholders themselves are responsible for collecting and analyzing the information, and for generating recommendations for change and better learning. Participants expressed their experiences and emphasized that “Through participatory evaluation, students identify their strengths and weaknesses, and gain self-confidence as well” (ins²-femal).

**Peer evaluation**

They considered the students as the most important source for evaluation of student learning especially in the clinical setting, because they interact directly with one another and can be valid and reliable source of information. In fact, learners work for continuous courses in close proximity, and they inevitably have an opportunity to evaluate each other. So, self-evaluation and peer evaluation is as a supplement method to other methods of evaluation to measure students’ clinical performance. The participants expected a difference between classroom and clinical setting evaluation criteria. “I tell them, 30% of the score is self-assessment, 40% of score is peer assessment and 30% of the scores are for teacher evaluation” (asi²-female).

**Feedback**

To perform successful evaluations, teachers must be able to translate and interpret the multitude of situations experienced by students throughout the clinical placement. Determining the quality of student learning is an ongoing challenge to all educators. However, for educators and students in the health professions, evaluation of learning takes on a different dimension in terms of ensuring that graduates are competent, and thus safe, practitioners. Some of the educators explained their understanding phrases commonly used in teaching and learning process. Instructors teach them and finally to measure their learning based on defined goals. We reflect on their learning outcomes but judgment is very difficult” (aso4, femal).

**Effective educator**

The second theme was effective educator. This theme consisted of three sub-themes (Table 1).

**Clinical credibility**

Clinical credibility is the impression formed about the performance of a health care provider in the care and treatment of patients and nursing is a practical discipline and clinical education is considered as indispensable part of professional nursing education. Nursing education occurs in four main settings: classroom, seminars, skill laboratories and clinical area calling for different pedagogical approaches. Respondents believed that a competent teacher has many characteristics. “Competent and qualified teachers in nursing education should be efficient in clinical practice” (aso-femal).

**Professional communication**

Based on experience of respondents, effective educator, as a member of the team is important on effectiveness of education. They form working relationships and cooperate professionally with all members of the team. One educator stated “I think educators are those who had a constructive relationship with clinical nurses. They were a source of support for student in the wards and introduced them to the personnel and their roles and responsibilities on the ward” (aso-male). Another commended “communication skills has become an essential component of many curricula in the education of health care professionals” (aso-male)

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2 - ins=Instructor  
3  - asi=Assistant Professor  
4  - aso=Associate Professor
and another stated" educator is able to form a positive relationship with the student” (ins12-femal).

Respondents believed that clinical competency as an attribute of an effective educator is a direct result of consolidation of their knowledge base. One educator stated “in my opinion, any clinical educator has to be fully competent so that they are able to display the expertise; knowledge needs to have become second nature for them if they are to be able to perform skillfully” (ins-femal).

**Scientific capability**

Based on the findings of the current study, the skills and expertise of the educator makes them a role model for the learners. One educator stated: "I emphasize that first I must be a good model in my behavior, then a good science teacher. I mean, students accept me as a socially normal person” (asi5-femal).

**Application knowledge**

The last theme is a more detailed laying out the characteristics of a good education process from the participants' perspectives. It consists of two sub-theme, role playing and application of knowledge in practice.

**Role playing**

Effective education allows the learner to be able to role play in different setting and put knowledge into practice.

Nurses have different roles such as management, consultate, and support and clinical. But in Iran, nurses are employed in hospitals after graduation. They do not have the opportunity to work in other environments. Asi8-male commended "Nursing students will be prepared to work in different roles but can only work in a hospital."

**Applying knowledge in practice**

From respondents' viewpoint, In effective education, students graduated as competent nurses that can apply their knowledge to the setting for the better caring, one of the educators commended" based on my experience a good teaching is that which students graduated can apply their knowledge in clinical" (ins3-femal). Also they believed that a good educator has important role on good education. "A good educator is someone who is able to turn her/his knowledge into practice” (ins22-femal).

**DISCUSSION**

This study provided an opportunity to find the comprehension and experiences of nursing educators regarding education process in both classroom and clinical setting.

In the first theme, role of evaluation was shown in education. Results indicate that educators’ perceptions of evaluation of nursing student in classroom and clinical contribute differentially to evaluate student learning at the end of the formal learning process, as University regulations require a summative evaluation with grades being awarded, and ranked, according to success of completion. They are used multi method of evaluation on classroom and clinical. Finally, we found that educators' perceptions of evaluation directly and indirectly influence academic achievement through their impact on indicators the nurses competent. Based on study findings and new methods of evaluation, participatory evaluation has an important role in the accreditation results (Braithwaite et al., 2012). Some experts believe that various spectrum of information resources are necessary to show a clear picture.

### Table 1. The trend of condensation-abstraction process for themes (sample).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>meaning units (instances)</th>
<th>Open coding (condensed meaning units)</th>
<th>Subcategories (sub-theme)</th>
<th>Main categories/ themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills are of paramount importance for healthcare professionals working with patients.(ins11-femal)</td>
<td>Professional Clinical Skills role model Clinical decision</td>
<td>Clinical credibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing education program caused to empower staff.(ins6-male)</td>
<td>Scientific dynamic Continuing Education</td>
<td>Scientific capability</td>
<td>Effective educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional community training is one of the factors to become professional (aso18-female)</td>
<td>Professional relationship between the individual communication between the professionals</td>
<td>Professional communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of the performance of educators, because there is a tendency to value judgment in individual evaluation (Bryan et al., 2009; Dellai et al., 2009). So, self-evaluation and peer evaluation as one of the ways to receive feedback from learners, can be a useful reflection of the success of educational programs for developing their necessary abilities in general and particular performance, and can be as a powerful tool for enhancing individual and group dynamics (Sokhan et al., 2011).

The second theme conveyed the participants' perspectives and experiences regarding characteristics of educator of education process in classroom and clinical setting. Respondents in this study viewed clinical competency as the ability to put theory into practice. The results of the study illustrated that, in an Iranian context, effective educators are those who are skilled in clinical, have scientific validity, is able to communicate professionally with other team members and provide a efficacy and effective care. They act as a role model enabling their students to manage their professional challenges, which are a direct result of the specific socio-cultural conditions of nursing profession in Iran. Because nursing in Iran is at the initial phases of professionalization, a "professional approach in education" is the effective key to success.

The findings are in agreement with two quantitative studies carried out by Nahas et al. (1999). Nahas et al. (1999) reported that students expected that educators should be knowledgeable and competent. Researchers reported that students expected that clinical educators should be knowledgeable and competent (Clercq et al., 2011). Also, Seevers et al. (2007) contended that extension educators are often hired mainly based on their subject matter knowledge rather than their skills or experience in the educational processes. Because the success of an educational program does not only depend on the subject matter content offered to clientele, a professional develop-ment program is needed to develop extension educator's competencies for using the educational processes wisely (Seevers et al., 2007). The competencies in the educational processes determine educators' ability to effectively plan and deliver educational activities and facilitate learning of the extension audience (Seevers et al., 2007; Ghimire and Martin, 2011). Educators have a fundamental role to play in creating and improving learning environments in a clinical setting (Kelly, 2007).

Result of the research showed that in Iran, one of the problems that exist in the clinical training is the gap between what clinical educators teach and their practice (Adib-Hajbaghery and Dianati, 2005). Respondents in this agreement with two quantitative studies carried out by Clercq et al. (2011).

Teacher effectiveness is more difficult to evaluate in diverse, often fast paced, highly complex clinical setting, than more controlled environments such as seminars, laboratory and classrooms. It has been postulated that clinical teachers must possess effective clinical teacher characteristics if they are to facilitate students' entry and learning in multifaceted world of clinical practice (Ashworth and Longmate, 1993).

The third theme was related to a more detailed laying out the characteristics of a good education process from the participants' perspectives. Results from this study have shown that they emphasized that gap theory–practice will have the negative emphasis on professional. Researcher said that a gap between the theory and practice will lead to a number of negative consequences. One of the greatest challenges of education is integrating leadership theory (as it is presented in the classroom) into practice (Elahi et al., 2012b). The result of this study showed that nursing students were not satisfied with the clinical component of their education. The gap caused lack of clinical experience, unfamiliar areas, difficult patients, fear of making mistakes and being evaluated by faculty members. Firstly, it will have an adverse impact upon the collective professional conduct of nursing students. If their conduct is not guided by well-founded theories this will result in de professionalization (Billings and Kowalski, 2006). Faculty must be creative in minimizing the gap between leadership theory and practice. By integrating theory into practice, students are able to experience "real world" issues in a safe environment with the hope is that these experiences will assist the students in strengthening their professional skills (Hatlevik, 2011).

**Conclusion**

The study analyzed findings that nursing teacher’s perceptions of effective teaching are contingent on the teacher’s effective, participated evaluation of student and ability of implicated knowledge on clinical. The results of this study can provide more qualified knowledge for how achieved effective education. All interviewees felt a theory-practice gap does exist, and whilst this could be viewed positively as a means of developing students’ problem-solving skills, critical thinking by development of an innovative curriculum allowing closer sequencing of theory and practice, evaluating the effect length of clinical placement has on knowledge and skill acquisition, improving collaboration between clinical areas and educational institutions and developing preceptors' lecturing roles. Through determination of these themes, nursing educators can improve their teaching and evaluation methodology and provide a more effective learning environment for the learner. The identification of these terms also has implications for graduate nursing education, as clinical teachers are being prepared in this arena to enter the teaching environment.

Administrators should consider utilization of these themes for educational planning and evaluation of effective
education.

Limitation

The results of current qualitative study, by its nature, cannot be generalized. It is suggested that the study should be carried out with larger samples in similar cultures. However, our research had a number of strengths that validate the findings and is the first study that was performed in this area by adopting qualitative research methodology to explain the process of nursing effective education. It is hoped and expected that the research findings sensitize the nursing authorities focus on concerns shown in the data. Therefore the supervisor can use strategies to help the students to reflect on the content and to enhance the learning outcomes of the nursing education program and to become professionals.

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