Undergraduate Nursing Students’ Perception of Effective Clinical Teacher

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Introduction

Clinical training is the core of nursing education and is vital for the preparation of professional nurse. Clinical teachers’ behaviours play a key role in learning process of students. The quality of student–clinical teacher interaction can either facilitate or hinder the students’ learning. Nursing students’ perception of effective clinical teacher characteristics is an important indicator to modify and facilitate clinical instruction. Several quantitative and qualitative studies contrasted effective and ineffective teachers’ behaviours. Current procedures used to evaluate teaching in health related fields are generally student-based. Universities rely primarily on students’ evaluation when attempting to quantify an instructor’s teaching effectiveness. Despite the need for effective clinical education, the criteria for determining effective clinical teaching remains poorly defined (Lee et al., 2002). This Study explored the effective characteristics of clinical teacher as perceived important by Omani undergraduate nursing students at College of Nursing (CON), Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).
Objectives of the study:

1. To determine the effective clinical teacher characteristics perceived important by nursing students of SQU, College of Nursing.

2. To find out any difference between male and female nursing students’ perceptions in relation to the important characteristics of a clinical teacher.

3. To find out any association between students’ perception of important characteristics of clinical teacher and their levels of academic year.

4. To find out the best student teacher ratio as perceived by the students for clinical instruction.

Methodology

Figure 1: Schematic Representation of Research Methodology
**Methods:** With the permission from Research and Ethics Committee, the researchers contacted students and explained the purpose and voluntary nature of the study. Their consent was obtained after being ensured the confidentiality of the data. A validated 40 item questionnaire was administered to participants. The questionnaire has three sections. Section-I contains demographic data such as gender, cohort, number of exposure to clinical instructors. Section- II listed 38 items of clinical teacher characteristics which are grouped into three categories as 1) Professional Competence with 18 statements 2) Relationship with Students with 8 statements 3) Personal Attributes with 12 statements. These clinical teacher characteristics statements were rated on a four point Likert- scales ranged from “most important” to “unimportant”. Section III consists of two open ended questions regarding good ratio of students to clinical teacher. The average time taken for data collection was 10-15 minutes per student. Data were collected during the last two weeks of clinical posting in spring 2010 April 20th to May 5th. The data were analyzed on the basis of objectives of the study using SPSS version 16. Both descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation, unpaired t test and chi-square test were used to find answers to the objectives.

**Results of the study**

Out of 120 students 119 (99.1%) were exposed to more than five clinical teachers and 50 (41.67%) of them belonged to fourth year, 45(37.50%) participants from third year and the remaining 25(20.83) from the second year. Majority (70%) of the sample were females. The results in figure 2 revealed that SQU nursing students rated professional competence of clinical teachers as the most important characteristics, followed by teachers’ relationship with students.
Both male and female students perceived professional competence of clinical teachers and their relationship with students as most important without any difference. Whereas a significant statistical difference between male and female nursing students’ perceptions on personal attributes of clinical teachers (p < 0.037) were noted. Chi-square test revealed no significant association between students’ perception of important clinical teacher characteristics and their levels of academic year. All students perceived evaluating objectively and fairly as most effective trait, table 1 reveals the priority list of most important clinical teacher characteristics rated by SQU nursing students.
Table 1. Rank Order of the Five Most Important Effective Clinical Teacher Characteristic Perceived by Nursing Students of Sultan Qaboos University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S No</th>
<th>Effective Clinical Teacher Characteristic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Objective and Fair Evaluation</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Role Modelling</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Clinical Skill Competence</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Good Communication Skills</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Respect Student as an Individual</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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From Figure 3 it is evident that 60% students prefer to have one teacher for 4 or less than 4 students.
Discussion: The sample consists of 70% females and 30% males, this gender distribution agrees with the overall gender distribution of the nursing students in the College of Nursing at SQU. Findings of the study highlighted the professional competence of a clinical teacher as the most important characteristic and this agrees with findings of previous studies (Claudette, 2006; Zane et al., 2004).

Nursing students of Arab countries like Jordan reported the same findings. Nahas, et al., (1999) explored Jordanian undergraduate nursing students’ perception of effective clinical teacher characteristics and found out the professional competence of clinical teacher as the most important characteristic. The most important characteristic as role modelling behaviour of clinical teacher is in par with suggestions of Ibry, 2000 who strongly recommended role modelling as one among the three key roles of clinical teachers.

Conclusion: Clinical teachers must possess effective teaching characteristics to facilitate clinical learning. SQU Nursing Students value the clinical teachers’ professional competencies as the most important characteristics. Objective evaluation, respecting students and good communicative skills with role modelling characteristics were ranked as the most effective teaching characteristics by SQU nursing students. The results may assist multicultural faculty to appreciate students’ views and acknowledge areas of success as well as areas needing improvement. Academic administrators can use the findings to guide faculty development process including induction and mentoring program. As clinical teachers become aware of those characteristics that are perceived important, teaching strategies and attitudes can be reinforced, modified, or developed in order to promote clinical learning an enjoyable experience to students.
References.


