

Impact of Teaching Behaviors on the Global Nursing Shortage

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In the United States undergraduate nursing program application numbers are increasing rapidly. However, the number of nurse educators has not experienced the same growth. Nursing programs are challenged to accommodate more students and in order to meet this challenge, there must be a concurrent increase in nursing faculty. Enrollment in generic baccalaureate programs increased by 19.7% in the last five years (AACN, 2020). Of the 233,098 applicants meeting admission criteria to generic baccalaureate programs in 2019-2020, 67,785 were not offered admission, 29% (AACN, 2020). The top two reasons cited for not admitting all qualified applicants were insufficient clinical sites, 72.3% and insufficient number of faculty, 49.7% (AACN, 2020). While there was not similar data found regarding specific numbers of the nurse educator shortage globally, it has been documented in countries such as Australia, Ireland and the Philippines (Nardi & Gyurko, 2013; Oprescu et al., 2017).

In the United States, nurses must obtain an advanced practice degree to teach in an undergraduate nursing program. Unfortunately, many of these programs do not address the critical component of transitioning from bedside clinical nursing to academia. It is necessary to evaluate nurse educator programs to ensure graduate students are prepared to assume a faculty position. One way to ease the transition is to provide students with effective teaching behaviors that can be used in the educational setting. The National League for Nursing (NLN) has urged educators globally to reflect on the effectiveness of their practices to ensure collaboration, mutual trust, respect, equality and accepted differences are continually practiced (2005). Current evidence related to global nursing education is not as robust concerning effective teaching in the didactic setting. Nursing specific literature is available more widely regarding effective teaching in the clinical setting (in-patient hospital, outpatient clinics, etc.).

The Teacher Behavior Checklist (TBC) is a 28-item instrument used to identify effective teaching behaviors of master teachers in higher education (Buskist et al., 2002). Only one study has been conducted using the TBC related to nursing education and its purpose was to determine baccalaureate nursing student and nursing faculty views of effective teaching (Noll, 2017). Results of the study found students and faculty agreed on five of the top 10 behaviors identified: (a) knowledgeable about subject matter, (b) approachable/personable, (c) enthusiastic about teaching and about topic, (d) effective communicator, and (e) realistic expectations of students/fair testing and grading (Noll, 2017). A comparison of Noll (2017) and four other studies using students and the TBC in the United States found agreement on five of the top 10 behaviors identified: (a) knowledgeable about subject matter, (b) approachable/personable, (c) realistic expectations of students/fair testing and grading, (d) enthusiastic about teaching and about topic, and (e) encourages and cares for students (Buskist et al., 2002; Ford, 2016; Mowrer et al., 2004; Noll, 2017; Schaeffer et al., 2003). Similarly, faculty from Noll (2017) and four other studies in the United States also agreed on five of the top 10 behaviors: (a) knowledgeable about subject matter, (b) enthusiastic about teaching and about topic, (c) approachable/personable, (d) creative and interesting, and (e) promotes critical thinking/intellectually stimulating (Buskist et al., 2002; Ford, 2016; Ismail, 2014; Noll, 2017; Schaeffer et al., 2003). It is important to note in the United States among students and faculty across five studies that knowledgeable about subject matter, approachable/personable and enthusiastic about teaching and about topic were identified as effective behaviors of college/university faculty. Internationally, the top five qualities among 14 student groups were: knowledgeable about subject matter (n=14), approachable/personable (n=12), realistic expectations

of students/fair testing and grading (n=12), enthusiastic about teaching and about topic (n=11) and effective communicator (n=9) (Buskist et al., 2002; Schaeffer et al., 2003; Mowrer et al., 2004; Keeley et al., 2012; Joemma, 2013; Ford, 2016; Liu et al., 2016; Noll, 2017; Zayac & Lenhard, 2018; Crowder, 2019).

Students from around the world have identified the need for faculty who are knowledgeable about what they are teaching, and this is extremely applicable to nursing education. The ability of nursing faculty to provide real-life, applicable examples in the didactic, lab and simulation setting is invaluable. In addition, faculty who can easily answer questions regarding disease processes and proper nursing care provide competence and experience to the learning environment. Learning to be approachable and personable with students can take time to find the right balance. It is important to set boundaries but also invite students to be an active participant while being respectful of the student's learning needs.

With a looming nurse faculty shortage, it is important to incorporate education regarding effective teaching behaviors into graduate nursing programs to better prepare future faculty. Graduate students should be able to practice effective behaviors during their practicum experience. Providing opportunities to understand and adopt evidence-based behaviors will allow new nurse faculty to start their career with strategies to engage students and hopefully improve student success.

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