

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance of the Research Problem

Ethics is taking an increasingly prominent place in nursing education. As Laino-Kilpi (2001) found ethics teaching has always been a part of nursing education, although its importance and substance have varied at different times of nursing's history. To be a competent and ethical nurse, it is advisable to study ethics (Peter, 2003). Ethics education ensures that students have a basic understanding of nursing ethics as well as a tool, which is necessary when approaching ethical problems. Therefore, nurses are able to perform moral action in their professional practice (Ericksen, 1993). In addition, Fry (1994) mentioned that the overall goal of teaching ethics is to produce a morally accountable nurse who is skilled in ethical decision-making.

In order to be more active and effective in ethical decision-making, nurses need to be prepared by their basic education to develop the ethical skill (Dinç & Gögülü, 2002; Dunn, 1998). Peter (2003) claimed that without formal preparation, ethical decision-making process might be intuitive and based on personal sense of ethically correct actions. Dunn (1998) mentioned that ethical learning is a method of respecting others' and one's own self-determining in vulnerable situations. Nurses who study ethics can increase their effectiveness as caregivers and decision makers (Thompson & Thompson, 1992). The educational preparations should not lose sight

of the graduating nurse having a strong knowledge base in ethics and reaching a decision about ethical issues in practice (Peter, 2003).

Preparing professional nurses who are capable in ethical decision making and dealing with ethical dilemmas effectively since they were nursing students is necessary (Chaowalit, Hatthakit, Nasaee, Suttharangsee, & Parker, 2002). Similarly, Cassells and Redman (1989) mentioned that preparing for ethical responsibilities must be part of the preparation for the professional role. Studies suggested that in nursing education research should be focused on appropriate teaching strategies for enhancing professional values and promoting socialization atmosphere for fostering the ethical behavior of nursing students (Cassells & Redman, 1989; Chaowalit et al., 2002). Several studies have shown that teaching-learning strategies seemed to be inconsistent. Nursing students preferred teacher-centered approaches; in contrast, lecturers preferred a student-centered approach (Burnard & Marrisons, 1992; Cowman, 1995). In addition, a study by Voughan (1990) found that nursing students are more predisposed toward learner-centered methods. Those studies highlight the importance of students' views being taken into account when planning and implementing curricula.

Furthermore, important factors that contribute to teaching ethics are teachers or educators. Educators are responsible for imparting knowledge to nurses and ensuring skills to recognize moral considerations in professional context (Gastmans, 2002). In addition, Laino-Kilpi (2001) found that selection of ethical content is the teachers' responsibility. Teachers should use teaching principles to enhance their effectiveness, have practical experience in nursing ethics and ability to adopt

appropriate teaching methodologies. Sometimes nurse educators who have ethics expertise are in shortage supply. Therefore, ethics component has to be taught by a faculty member who is in another specialty or is a philosopher (Dinç & Görgülü, 2002). The survey of Parsons, Barker, and Armstrong (2001) reported that nearly 80% of nursing lecturers acknowledged that health care ethics was a poorly taught subject and insufficient time was allocated within the curriculum. Additionally, the students found that teaching approach used for ethics course was difficult.

In Indonesia, nursing curriculum was first reviewed in 1984, but it was prepared for the whole of Indonesia in 1997. A new curriculum was implemented in all Diploma III nursing programs by mid-1999. However, there is no accreditation of courses, little standardization of curricula, and no benchmarking or competency assessment among nurses (Shields & Hartati, 2003).

A major problem faced by Indonesian government is the low level of basic nursing education. There are 39% of nurses who graduated at diploma III level. Approximately 60% are practical nurses who study in a three-years nursing program after junior high school. Only about 1% of nurses have a baccalaureate degree or post graduate degrees. Nurses with diploma III degrees often take up teaching position immediately after graduation. Therefore, nurse educators in academies may have limited knowledge of on-going educational needs (Shields & Hartati, 2003).

In Nursing Academy of Semarang, the ethics course is offered for two credits (36 hours) in the first semester of the first academic year. The content covers lectures and discussion regarding the principles, standard and professional attitude based on moral values, rights, privacy of the patient as a human, nurse's

accountability toward society, nursing profession, and other professions (Nursing Academy of Semarang, 1995). In 1997, the curriculum was revised. Two courses were offered: 'General Ethics and Etiquette' in the first semester of the first academic year and 'Nursing Ethics' in the second semester of the first academic year (Nursing Academy of Semarang, 1997). Although two courses of ethics have been presented, the contents are overlapping.

There are no reported studies in nursing education in especially in ethics education in Central Java, Indonesia. Therefore, this study can provide beneficial information about ethics education in Central Java. Nursing educators, especially in Diploma III programs, Health Polytechnic Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia, may use the results of the study as baseline data in developing ethics courses in nursing curricula.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to describe nursing ethics education for nursing students in Diploma III programs in Central Java, Indonesia, as follows:

1. Students' characteristics and teachers' background
2. Ethics course contents for diploma III programs in nursing
3. Teaching-learning methods and evaluation of ethics teaching
4. Students' participation in ethical decision making based on the patient-centered model, the physician-centered model, and the bureaucratic-centered model

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the students' characteristics and teachers' background?
2. What are the ethics course contents provided for Diploma III programs in nursing?
3. How frequently are teaching-learning methods and evaluation used in ethics teaching in DIII programs in nursing?
4. How frequently do the students participate in ethical decisions making based on the patient-centered model, the physician-centered model, and the bureaucratic-centered model?

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on a conceptual framework adopted from Perceptual-Existential Theory, which is the school of thought that provides a perspective on learning (Van-Hoozer, 1987). Human beings do not operate in vacuum. Environmental conditions influence how the individual will respond, as well as which response he or she will choose to make in a given situation. Learning is universal, personal, sociocultural cognitive, and effective upon unique attributes and perceptual responses to the environment. Learning events must be seen as a means of achieving personal goals that satisfy basic human needs and goals. Both human and nonhuman environmental conditions influence learning.

This study was focused on the nursing students characteristics, ethics teachers, ethics course contents, and learning process in ethics teaching, and outcomes of ethics education in D III programs, as shown in Figure 1.

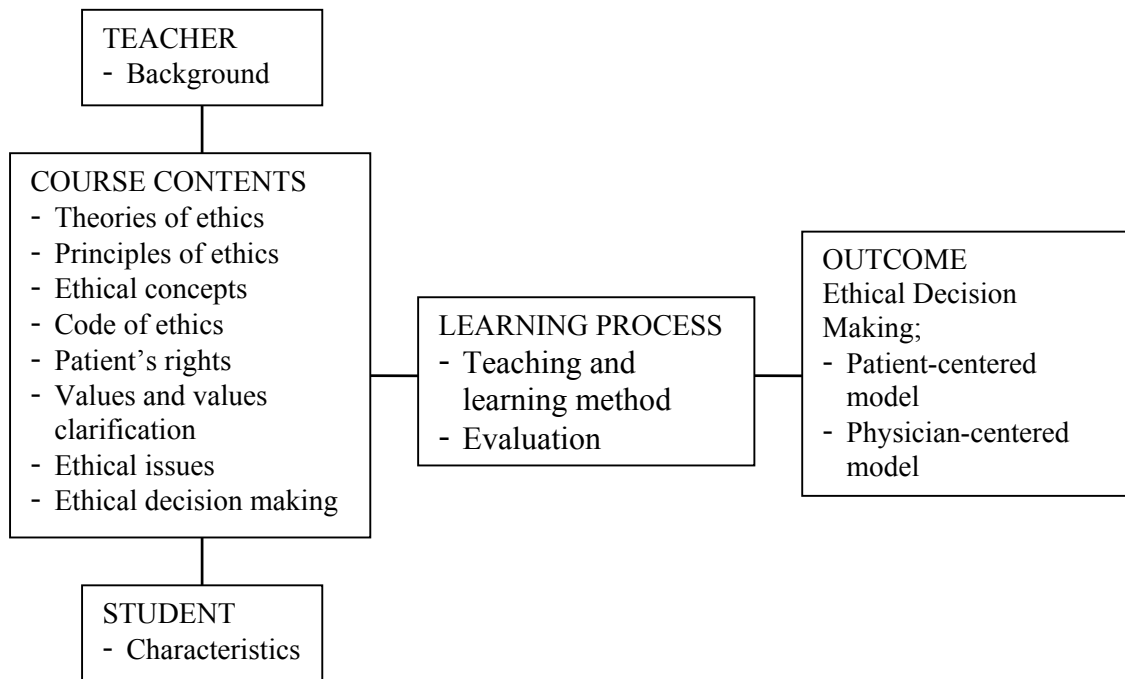


Figure 1 The framework to study nursing ethics education for nursing students in Diploma III programs adopted from Van-Hoozer (1987)

Firstly, the teachers are the persons who are involved in ethics teaching and course coordinators of nursing ethics courses. According to Perceptual-existential theory, activities of teacher are focused on planning and arranging optimum condition in learning. Therefore, teachers must be a potent social force to arrange experiences that immerse learners (students). The teacher is also viewed as a growing organism who has unique knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and feelings.

Such uniqueness will influence teaching behaviors. In this study, the researcher examined teachers' background.

The second component is course contents. The contents in ethics education are theory of ethics, principles of ethics, ethical concepts, code of ethics, patient rights, values and values clarification, ethical issue, and ethical decision-making. Understanding of ethical aspects of the professional nurse must be firmly included through nursing educational experiences. Thus, in this study, the researcher examined the ethics course contents of Diploma III programs in nursing, Health Polytechnic Semarang, Central Java.

The third component in this study is students or learners. Perceptual-existential theory stated that each learner is unique, with particular hereditariness, social backgrounds, understandings, skills, values, and attitudes. Individual conditions have unique responses to the immediate environment. Learning takes place more readily when the individual attribute, qualities or perception of learner are considered. In this study, the researcher examined students' characteristics.

The fourth component is learning process. According to Perceptual-Existential theory, learning is defined as an active process of interaction between the learner and the environment. Learning is dependent upon what student does, and involves how the individual thinks and acts. Learning is an intense, personal phenomenon that involves exploration, discovery, and striving for personal meaning. Learning is regarded as a social phenomenon involving other people. Learning experiences are designed to motivate and assist the learner to gain the potential for

becoming an independent learner. In this study, the researcher examined teaching learning methods and evaluation used in ethics teaching.

The fifth component is outcome. Learning is any change in cognitive, psychomotor or behavior that is the result of experiencing. Learned behaviors do not occur overnight, but gradually over time. In this study, the researcher focused on ethical decision making of students as an outcome by using three models of decision making proposed by Murphy (1984) and Swider, McElmury, and Yearling (1985). The models of decision making include; (1) The patient-centered model, (2) The physician-centered model, and (3) The bureaucratic-centered model.

Definition of Terms

Ethics education refers to the teaching of ethics for nursing students in Diploma III program in Health polytechnics in Central Java, including;

1. Ethics course contents refer to the topics in nursing ethics courses to aid teachers to meet the goals of ethics teaching throughout the ethics courses and other courses that cover topics related to nursing ethics.
2. Teacher is defined as a person who is involved in the teaching and learning process in the ethics course, and includes the course coordinator. The teachers' background is the focus of the teacher in this study.
3. Student is defined as a person who is in the third year in Diploma III program in nursing, Health Polytechnic Semarang, Central Java in 2004. The students' characteristics are the focus in this study.

4. Learning process refers to teaching and learning method and evaluation of ethics teaching, which are employed during ethics courses.
5. Outcome refers to students' participation in ethical decisions making based on three models of decision-making; the patient-centered model, the physician-centered model, and the bureaucratic-centered model.

Ethics education defined above was investigated by instruments modified by the researcher based on two studies of Chaowalit, Suttharangsee, Nasae, Petpichetchian, Intarasombat, and Khampalikit (2004) and Suttharangsee, Petpichetchian, Chaowalit, Nasae, Khampalikit, and Intarasombat (2004) and other related literatures. The instruments comprised five parts; (1) students' characteristics, (2) teachers' background, (3) ethics course contents, (4) teaching learning methods and evaluation of ethics teaching, and (5) students participation in ethical decision making.

Significance of the Study

Based on the findings of this study, the following implications can contribute to nursing education, nursing practice and the development of further research.

1. For nursing education, the research findings can be used as a pool of information available as baseline data on ethics education and as a reference or guidance for developing nursing ethics courses in the nursing curriculum in Diploma III programs in nursing.

2. For nursing practice, the research findings can be used to prepare continuing education for nurses to have skill in ethical decision making in order to increase quality in nursing practice.
3. For nursing research, the research findings can be used as a reference for further study to determine proper teaching learning methods and teachers' qualifications in ethics, assess factors related to ethical decision making, and develop a model of ethics education to improve ethical decision-making skill of students.