



Ethics Education in Nursing: Now More Complicated Than Ever

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ANEC 2017
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TRANSITION, TECHNOLOGY, TRANSFORMATION

Background

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Nurses face a plethora of ethical challenges in their everyday practice. There is a growing need to have an ethical component taught throughout the nursing curriculum to develop nursing students' ethical judgements.

Aim
The aim of this research was to explore what experiences and challenges nursing educators faced teaching ethics and to identify the sorts of difficulties being encountered in their own classroom practice.

Methodology
A case study approach was used to examine nursing ethics' education in a New Zealand tertiary education context.

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The Study Findings

- ❖ The importance of ethical awareness
- ❖ "Ethics is a contextual topic"
- ❖ Ethics as an integrated topic
- ❖ Ethics code offers ambiguous guidance

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The Study Findings

- ❖ A universal nursing ethics approach is a Western culturally biased approach
- ❖ Bridging the divide between theory and practice through reflection
- ❖ Confidence and positive encounters in teaching nursing ethics

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Figure: Adaptation of Pratt & Associates' model of teaching (2005, P.4)

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Recommendations

- ❖ Ethics education is best addressed through ethics courses in the nursing programme and needs to be infused throughout all courses
- ❖ Because ethics is a contextual topic, the lack of integration between ethical theory and actual practice is a challenge for nursing educators. For this reason, nursing education must create a learning environment that better reflects professional nursing practice.
- ❖ Moral development for students and teachers alike is a dynamic and on-going process. Nursing educators must use scaffolding strategies to promote students' critical self-reflection on ethical issues and provide a safe learning environment to move students towards a deeper understanding of nursing ethics.

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Recommendations

- ❖ Nursing educators must recognise the multifaceted issues that influence students' understanding of ethical principles including the dominant ideologies governing ethics codes and nursing practice, and integrate cultural safety principles into nursing ethics.
- ❖ Nursing ethics need to be taught by nursing educators themselves from a nursing perspective. The incorporation of experiences of professional nursing practice and clinical judgement skills of nursing educators is essential to teaching nursing ethics in a nursing programme.

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