

Online Faculty Teaching Effectiveness and Quality Indicators

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BACKGROUND

Distance education programs in nursing are growing in increased numbers. Online programs range from associate's to doctoral nursing degrees. With the growing number of distance education programs in nursing, nursing faculty need to be competent and possess the skills necessary for online teaching effectiveness. Student learning and achievement of outcomes is fostered through effective teaching strategies. Currently, from the perspective of how faculty view online teaching effectiveness and what constitutes quality, more needs to be known.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to investigate how faculty teaching in an online nursing program define and describe teaching effectiveness and quality indicators.

METHOD

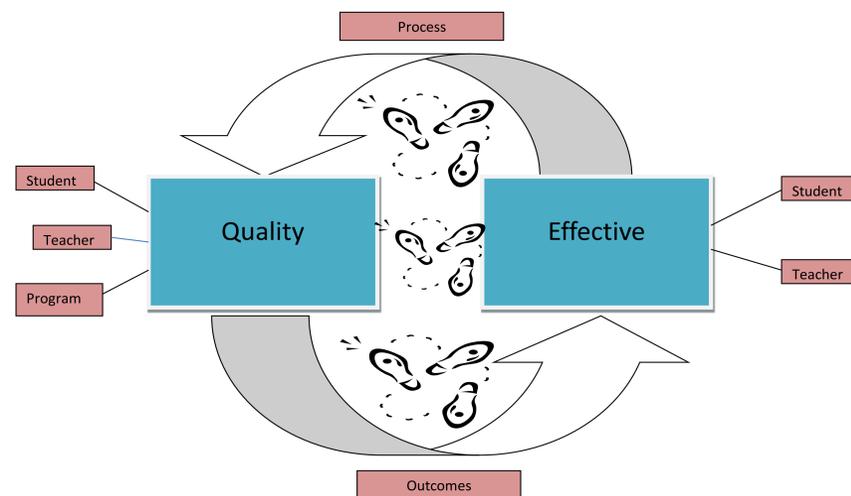
Purposive sampling was utilized to seek out participants known to have experience in nursing academia and a distance learning environment. Nursing faculty teaching for an online university were contacted via email to participate in a one hour teleconference. To be eligible to participate, participants were required to have at least two years of experience within a distance learning environment. Procedures for the protection of human subjects were followed.

Focus group methodology was selected for this descriptive study. Specifically, the design was selected to uncover online nursing faculty perceptions of what constitutes teaching effectiveness, indicators of quality, and to share personal examples in a non-threatening group discussion. Participants were divided up into two focus groups, based on participant availability, for a scheduled one hour group teleconference interview. A semi-structured interview format was used to guide the discussion. Group sessions were recorded via InterCall, an online conference account management tool, and as a back-up, audio-recorded. Each session was transcribed verbatim and verified by investigators to ensure accuracy.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed line by line by each researcher independently based upon the transcripts. Then, working together, the researchers collapsed or expanded codes and categories to best fit the data and interpret the findings. Through a sequence of investigative sessions among researchers, consensus was reached on thematic organization of categories.

Analysis of data resulted in the development of a concept map to provide a visual configuration of teaching effectiveness and quality indicators. A metaphor was used to provide a vivid comparison between dance and two themes identified: dancing with the future stars; and it's a standing ovation.



FINDINGS

Participants collectively had an average quantified experience of 20 years at various curricular levels. The sample consisted of eight nursing faculty from one online university within the United States. All faculty were doctoral prepared. Participant's extensive experience provided rich description to visualize the curriculum as a choreographed dance performance on the stage of the online classroom.

Dancing With the Stars

Courses served as choreographed acts. Students and instructor take turns dancing synergistically with one another. Students and instructor work together in synchrony to achieve course outcomes.

Effective teaching was viewed as:

- Facilitating learning
- Leading students
- Inspiring students to engage others
- Connecting with students
- Establishing mutual comfort
- Stimulating students to explore new thoughts

It's a Standing Ovation

The overall artistic visions are seen as driving the performers to yield a standing ovation performance as the allegory for the achievement of tangible quality indicators.

Quality indicators were perceived as:

- Students' success (passing)
- Demonstration of improvement
- Application of knowledge and skills
- Instructor competency
- Instructor and student satisfaction

SOCIAL CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

The study gave voice to online nursing instructors by eliciting their perceptions of what constitutes teaching effectiveness and quality in an online learning environment. As growth continues in the number of degree programs being offered online, sharing attributes of teaching effectiveness and indicators of quality will guide faculty transitioning into the role within an online environment.