

Chapter 1

ORIENTATION TO RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Recent political and economic changes in national education in South Africa demand purposefully planned management of nursing schools to ensure professional accreditation. Excellent leadership and effective management of nursing schools are imperative to ensure quality outputs in the midst of increasing academic demands and continuous change. In order to keep up with changes in education, and in accepting the responsibility of quality education in nursing, the importance of continuing education for nurse educators cannot be over-emphasised. Because of various reasons, including financial constraints (Calphin-Davies 2001:283) and the student:educator ratio (Madhaba & Brink 1994:48), the development of all personnel involved in the education and training of student nurses do not realise effectively at nursing colleges.

Nursing education and **nursing services** are dependent upon each other to ensure the rendering of high standards of patient care while providing learning opportunities and clinical support to student nurses functioning in the clinical setting. **Nursing services** require the services of well-educated and developed professional nurses, while **nursing education** needs appropriate learning opportunities for student nurses in the clinical setting (Van Niekerk 1992:29). Therefore, if nursing college management want clinical nurses/ preceptors to enhance the clinical skills of student nurses, nursing college management will have to ensure that adequate preceptoring or mentoring schemes are in place (Greenwood 2000:21).

The effective accompaniment of student nurses during the clinical phase of their training is imperative to ensure the end product namely safe, professional nurses. Nurse educators do not have sufficient time to effectively accompany student nurses in the clinical setting (Bastable 1997:12; Mashaba & Brink 1994:55; Calphin-Davies 2001:286) and rely to a great extent on registered nurses/ clinical preceptors to fulfill

this function. The primary function of registered nurses, however, is to render quality patient care while participation in the practice training of student nurses in academic hospitals where student nurses do the clinical part of their training programme, is a necessary requirement to enable the registered nurse to fulfill this function (SANA 1993:6). The scope of practice of the registered nurse is explained explicitly in regulation R2589 of the SANC, (SANC 1991) and the educational function of the registered nurse can be deduced.

It seems logical that if nursing colleges rely on registered nurses to accompany student nurses in the clinical setting, nursing colleges should provide for the educational part of registered nurses involved in the education and training of student nurses' skill development.

Health care facilities, on the other hand, need the assistance of nursing schools to enhance the professional development of registered nurses in the clinical setting. It is important that registered nurses will develop and maintain critical thinking skills, which are needed for the caring of patients and the accompaniment of student nurses. No published evidence was found of personnel development programmes at nursing schools which included registered nurses/ clinical preceptors for the end purpose of enhancing the quality of student accompaniment and patient care.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

Nursing education can only realise effectively when nurse educators and clinical preceptors are proficient in nursing theory and have sound clinical skills. Nursing education should ensure optimal facilitation of learning and accompaniment of student nurses within the dynamic, high tech environment of health care delivery through pro-active co-operation with health services (Greenwood 2000:18; Kotze 1997:241). The organisation of educational programmes and the academic development of students are not possible without a pro-active managerial approach to personnel development. Nursing school management should focus on the professional and personal development of the individual educator/clinical preceptor in order to enhance the quality of outputs of the nursing school to the benefit of the community as recipient of care. Professional development relates to subject specialisation and expertise in a specific discipline; and personal development

relates to creativity, critical thinking skills and the mastering of information technology (Olivier 1998:17; Tomlinson 1997:162).

Nursing is a practice discipline – the task of the nurse educator therefore includes the education and training of student nurses in the theoretical and clinical settings. Because of various factors observed in the educational setting, such as a heavy workload and logistical problems, nurse educators rely on the expertise and skills of clinical preceptors to assist with the accompaniment of student nurses in the clinical setting. The nurse educator, either in simulation laboratories or in the real situation, will incorporate the necessary related nursing theory in the demonstration of clinical skills. Students develop clinical skills under the supervision of the nurse educator during simulation practice, before independent application thereof in the clinical setting. In the clinical accompaniment of student nurses, the related theoretical content which apply to the specific patient's health needs, and the necessary clinical skills should be emphasized, and where necessary demonstrated.

The clinical accompaniment of students, however, does not realise effectively, as indicated by a survey done in 1999 in South Africa with regard to the provision of professional nurses. The purpose of the survey was to obtain a profile of students who did the four-year professional education programme. It was found that there was conflict between theory and practice – between theory taught and that which students experienced in clinical practice. Students made statements of perceived inability with regard to independent judgement and critical thinking skills, which reflected an inability to correlate theory and practice of patient care (Kortenbout & Foster 1999:23).

The implications of these statements are that nurse educators most probably rely on only textbook information in the facilitation of theoretical learning, which differs from the real situation and creates problems for students who have to make critical judgements in situations where patients have complications. The nurse educator should be visibly involved in student accompaniment in the clinical setting and should co-operate closely with the registered nurse/ clinical preceptor in creating a positive learning environment for student nurses (Reilly & Oermann 1992:117).

The ability to develop a climate of learning, identify appropriate clinical learning opportunities and enhance the use of creative strategies to facilitate learning, requires a knowledgeable, clinically competent nurse educator/ clinical preceptor who is committed to clinical teaching (Reilly & Oermann 1992:117). To uphold competence in nursing education, the continuous development of all personnel involved in the education and training of student nurses, is imperative.

The level of development of personnel involved in the education and training of student nurses, influences the educational management process and the quality of the learning climate in the nursing school. In an educational setting where educators and clinical preceptors are up-to-date with recent developments and continuously developing professionally, educational management can be shared, and an effective learning climate can be established.

This approach to a learning climate promotes inquiry, critical thinking and intellectual honesty (Dickerson 2000: 35). A managerial perspective on this situation, besides mutual respect for interdependence of nursing services and nursing education and a need for co-operation, implies that nursing school management should support the development of all registered nurses involved in the education and training of student nurses. Nurses involved in nursing education, need knowledge and skills regarding communication, critical thinking and collaboration as well as technological expertise to enhance professional growth (Greenwood 2000: 23). Apart from research, writing and possibly didactic skills, nurse educators may need updating in the application of critical thinking in patient care, whereas the clinical preceptor may need guidance/ education with regard to the accompaniment of student nurses, the facilitation of learning and the application of the critical thinking skill in the clinical setting.

To achieve the educational goals of nursing education (SANC 1982:2) nursing school management have an obligation towards nurse educators and clinical preceptors regarding personnel development. Management should enable nurse educators and clinical preceptors to effectively fulfill their role in the education and training of student nurses. Personnel development is a process that includes both formal and informal learning activities relating to role expectations within the nursing school (Kelly 1992:7). This definition implies the organisation of expected

developmental activities that will assist the nursing school in reaching defined goals through development, maintenance and assessment of nursing education activities.

Nursing colleges should adopt a pro-active approach when providing for the educational needs of personnel involved in the facilitation of learning of student nurses.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem, which this study investigates, relates to the managerial perspectives of nursing colleges on personnel development. It concerns the development of all personnel involved in the education and training of student nurses. Changes regarding national education in South Africa have to be reflected in the nursing education field as well. In order to ensure high standards of personnel functioning and the effective use of limited resources, it is necessary to reconsider the approaches to managerial and personnel development in nursing colleges. Effective management of a nursing school includes all the basic principles of management, as well as educational management and co-operation with clinical services where students undergo practical training. Planning of the development of all personnel involved in the education and training of student nurses, is an important managerial function of nursing schools. The inclusion of clinical preceptors in the **personnel development programme** of a nursing school requires effective co-operation with associated health care services. The nursing school and the health care service should co-operate regarding the content of a learning programme, facilities and resources, as well as the allocation of time and personnel to staff the required **personnel development department**.

Nurse educators should have developed educational skills with regard to the facilitation of learning in the theoretical and clinical fields of nursing to ensure clinical credibility and enhance clinical research (Murphy 2000: 704). The clinical preceptor who accompanies the student in the clinical field, apart from being able to use critical thinking skill, should be able to use the basic principles of education in order to facilitate learning in her/ his field of expertise. Up till now, the educational practice of the nurse educator and the clinical preceptor to a great extent was based on their personal knowledge and experience, or on trial and error. Managerial approaches of

nursing colleges did not make provision for the specific personal and professional developmental needs of nurse educators, and did not address the educational and developmental needs of clinical preceptors.

This study investigates the problem of the management of personnel development in nursing colleges, with specific reference to:

- The personal and professional development of both nurse educators and clinical preceptors regarding the necessary skills to enhance the quality of education
 - The availability of, and access to facilities that could enhance the development of nurse educators and clinical preceptors.
- *Research questions are:*
- What are the specific educational needs of nurse educators and clinical preceptors with regard to their function in the education of student nurses?
 - How does the management of nursing schools facilitate and/ or enhance personnel development?
 - Does personnel development take the professional and personal developmental needs of nurse educators and clinical preceptors into account?
 - To what extent does available resources support the development of nursing personnel involved in the education and training of student nurses?

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of the research is to establish if, and to what extent, management of nursing schools enhance personnel development with regard to the professional and personal development of the nursing educator and clinical preceptor. Furthermore, the researcher intends to identify problems regarding personnel development in nursing schools, and to develop a programme for the continuous education of nurse educators and clinical preceptors. The proposed programme will make provision for in-service education (ISE) and formal personnel development programmes.

1.5 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to:

- Determine the specific developmental needs of nurse educators and clinical preceptors with regard to their training and accompaniment of student nurses
- Ascertain the extent of personnel development provided by management of nursing schools for nurse educators and clinical preceptors involved in the education and training of student nurses in the clinical setting
- Establish if, and to what extent, available resources facilitate the development of nurse educators and clinical preceptors involved in the education and training of student nurses
- Develop a programme for continuous education for nurse educators and clinical preceptors.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Donabedian's theory on structural, process and outcomes standards as applied to quality improvement (with regard to personnel development in nursing schools) and Alspach's theoretical foundation of nursing staff development (Alspach 1995:3) serve as the theoretical framework of this study.

The setting of standards for personnel development can enhance co-operation between different role players. Co-operation between nursing school management, the personnel development department and nurse educators and clinical preceptors involved in the programme, can be promoted by:

- Describing agreed upon levels of competence
- Defining actual outcomes of the learning programme
- Addressing real developmental needs
- Generating new knowledge through creativity and innovation (Kendall 1988: 33).

Donabedian refers to three types of criteria that are necessary to meet standards, namely: structural criteria, process criteria and outcomes criteria (Parsley & Corrigan 1994: 8).

- **Structural criteria**

Structure standards refer to the setting, namely: the educational context and available resources. They include those antecedent conditions/ resources that make the educational effort possible, such as the organisational and administrative structures as well as human and material resources.

Structural aspects that could be included in a personnel development programme, are:

- Facilities regarding comfort, convenience of layout and accessibility of support services
- Adequate supplies, state-of-the-art equipment and the ability of personnel to use equipment
- Personnel aspects such as credentials, experience and personnel : student ratios
- Finances, salaries and adequate financial sources (Tappen 1995: 464).

Structural standards also address the integrative mechanisms of the nursing school, such as those aspects that promote communication and decision-making. Regulatory bodies such as Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), the National Qualification Framework and the health care authorities influence structural standards (Grohar-Murray & DiCroce 1997: 197; Olivier 1999: 7; South Africa 1998). These structural standards will not ensure efficient personnel development, but will enhance the quality of programme content and the effective execution thereof.

- **Process**

Process refers to the actual activities carried out by educators and preceptors to meet standards. Process elements are the actions and procedures used in conducting the programme, and include educational design, implementation, facilitation of learning and assessment of achievements (O'Connor 1986: 394; Parsley & Corrigan 1994: 9). Process can also include leadership and managerial activities.

- **Outcomes**

Outcomes concern programme performance in relation to the achievement of programme objectives (O'Connor 1986: 394). Outcomes measurements evaluate the effectiveness of activities by assessing specific desirable changes in the actions of

nurse educators and clinical preceptors. This group of standards is individual-centred and is usually identified along with process standards (Grohar-Murray & DiCroce 1997: 197).

The application and use of these theoretical foundations will be discussed in Chapter 3.

1.7 DEMARCATION OF RESEARCH

Research with regard to management of personnel development in the nursing academic setting will be conducted at nursing colleges associated with departments of nursing sciences at universities and technicons in South Africa. The research will involve only nursing colleges that present the comprehensive four-year course for registration as a nurse and the related health care facilities.

1.8 ASSUMPTIONS

An assumption is an accepted statement/ situation that is used to base a specific perspective on (Brink 1996: 205).

Assumptions that relate to management of a nursing school are as follows:

- Personnel development forms an integral part of nursing education management
- Educational facilities and structure should accommodate personnel development
- Co-operation with nursing services requires an agreement on the development of nurse educators and clinical preceptors involved in the education and training of student nurses
- A comprehensive personnel development programme for nurse educators and clinical preceptors will enhance the quality of nursing education.

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative descriptive exploratory approach will be used. Quantitative research will consist of a survey, which will explore the development of personnel involved in

the education and training of student nurses, the availability of facilities to enhance such development and the views of nursing college management in this regard. The target group will consist of principals of nursing schools, nursing educators, nursing directors of health care services and clinical preceptors in clinical settings where student nurses undergo clinical training.

The aim of the research is to investigate management of personnel development in nursing colleges, to determine the educational needs of nurse educators and clinical preceptors involved in the education and training of student nurses, and to establish which facilities are available for personnel development.

1.10 DEFINITIONS OF MAIN CONCEPTS

Descriptions of the main concepts in this study are important to facilitate interpretation.

- **Nursing Education**

Nursing education is the process of influencing the behaviour of nurses by producing changes in knowledge, attitudes, values and skills required to maintain and improve their competencies for the delivery of quality service to the consumer(student/learner/patient) (Bastable 1997:9). The education process is the broad umbrella process of teaching and instruction. Teaching is a deliberate intervention, involving the planning and implementation of instructional activities and experiences to meet intended learning outcomes, whereas instruction involves the communication of information about a specific skill in the cognitive, affective or psychomotor terrain (Bastable 1997:9).

- **Nursing School**

For the purpose of this research, a nursing school is a tertiary educational institution that offers a diploma/ degree in Nursing (General, Psychiatric, Community) and Midwifery to learners who at least have a senior certificate and want to qualify as registered nurses.

The South African Nursing Council (SANC) defines a nursing school as a post-secondary educational institution (SANC 1988: 1).

- **Nurse Educator**

A nurse educator is a person who is registered with the SANC as an Educator/Tutor and functions in a nursing college as an educator and facilitator of learning. The educator support and encourage learners and direct their learning, as well as assess learners development to enhance planning of further teaching activities. For the purpose of this research, the nurse educator is a person on the staff establishment of a nursing college, with a qualification in nursing education.

- **Clinical Preceptor**

According to Eksteen (1997: 1213), a preceptor is a teacher. For the purposes of this research, the clinical preceptor is a registered nurse who functions in the clinical setting where student nurses receive clinical training, participates in the clinical accompaniment of student nurses and, in a one-to-one relationship, serves as a role model for students, new graduates and other nurses.

- **Facilitation of Learning**

Facilitation of learning implies creating learning opportunities, and making facilities/resources available for learning. In the context of this research, facilitation of learning implies that the nurse educator/clinical preceptor should be able to create learning opportunities for student nurses in the theoretical and clinical settings, and guide and support students to attain learning outcomes.

- **Accompaniment**

Accompaniment of student nurses implies support and guidance of students regarding the identification and solving of problems, acting as a person of recourse and a role model, and rendering emotional support when necessary. In this research, accompaniment implies that the nurse educator/clinical preceptor should be able to plan the accompaniment of student nurses in the theoretical as well as the clinical settings, to enhance learning and development of the necessary skills.

- **Education**

Education relates to the comprehensive development of the individual (Bezuidenhout, Garbers & Potgieter 1998: 108). Education in nursing would therefore include the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of the relevant individual.

- **Training**

Training refers to the acquisition of specific skills or knowledge (Bezuidenhout et al. 1998: 108). In nursing education, training relates to all nursing and critical thinking skills required for the provision of nursing care, and the application of related theory to the practice in hand.

- **Evaluation**

To gather, summarize, interpret and use data to assess the extent to which an action was successful (Bastable 1997:343). In the context of this research, evaluation would imply the evaluation of learning outcomes.

- **Assessment**

To gather, summarize, interpret and use data to decide a direction for action (Bastable 1997:343). In the context of this research, assessment would imply the formative assessment of the student with the purpose of planning further assistance for the learner if necessary.

- **Student**

A person who is studying at a college or university (Hornby, Cowie & Windsor-Lewis 1974:875). For the purpose of this research a nursing student studying at a nursing college.

- **Learner**

A person who gain knowledge and skill by study, practice or being taught (Hornby, Cowie & Windsor-Lewis 1974:487). For the purpose of this research a learner is a person included in the personnel development programme.

- **RPL**

RPL is a system which allows the Council to identify appropriate knowledge and skill which were accumulated outside the formal academic qualifications, but could have been accepted as equivalent to formal academic qualifications for entry into

educational programmes, and uses the level and quantity of prior experiential learning of individuals, reliably against such identification of knowledge and skill (SANC 1999:7).

- **APL**

Assessment of prior learning (SANC 1999:7).

- **Obsolescence**

According to Eksteen (1997: 1213), obsolescence means outdated. For the sake of this research, obsolescence is the development of discrepancies in an individual's capability to perform required tasks to a required level (Willis & Dubin 1009:11). Obsolescence develops when an individual does not keep abreast of the dynamics in nursing and nursing education through continuous development.

1.11 EXPOSITION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Chapter 1: Orientation to research

This chapter forms the background of the research. It includes a description of the research problem, an explanation of research objectives, definitions of main concepts and an indication of the research purpose. The exposition of the research programme is also included.

Chapter 2: Literature review with regard to personnel development in nursing education

In Chapter 2, management of continuous development of personnel within the context of dynamic advances in education and health sciences as well as co-operation with health services regarding the development of personnel involved in the education and training of student nurses, will be discussed.

Chapter 3: The theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that forms the basis of this research, will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

The research methodology which will be used in this study, will be discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter will also include information about the survey (interviews and questionnaires) into the educational needs of nurse educators and clinical preceptors and a discussion of the data analysis.

Chapter 5: Analysis and interpretation of data

The analysis and interpretation of data gathered by means of interviews and questionnaires, will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 6 will contain the summary of the research as well as conclusions and recommendations for further research. A personnel development programme for nurse educators and clinical preceptors, based on educational needs derived from this study, will be included as Annexure A.

1.12 CONCLUSION

Management of personnel development in nursing schools is a dynamic and demanding enterprise. A holistic approach towards personnel development should include a continuous assessment of developmental needs of personnel - individual educational needs and institutional needs. Nursing education reflects on the state of the nursing profession and forms the foundation of nursing care. Constant changes in health care delivery and the dynamics of nursing education make it imperative that nursing education collaborates with the clinical setting to enhance the quality of nursing care and the application of theory to practice. This co-operation necessitates personnel development for both nurse educators and clinical preceptors.

A review of the literature will follow in the Chapter 2.