

Nursing Student Experience In Dedicated Education Units

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Abstract:

Background: In nursing education, providing nursing students with effective clinical placements is crucial for applying classroom knowledge, enhancing skills, and fostering their development into experienced nurses. As such, clinical practice plays a fundamental and essential role in nursing education. The Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) model has been proposed to facilitate direct learning from professional nurses for students. Additionally, students benefit from the expertise of clinical preceptors who ensure proper performance of duties and assess their abilities during placements.

Aim: This scoping review aims to examine Nursing student experience in dedicated education units

Methods: Using the Arksey and O'Malley framework, a scoping review was conducted to gather data. The search encompassed five databases: Academic Search Premier, MEDLINE, CINAHL, ERIC, and the British Education Index.

Results: literature search across various databases yielded a total of 491 initial studies. After removing duplicates and excluding studies for various reasons, 207 studies remained. Through careful evaluation of titles, abstracts, and full-text articles, a total of 9 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in this scoping review.

Conclusion: The Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) model has a positive impact on nursing students' experiences and outcomes in clinical learning. DEUs are perceived by students as high-quality learning environments, offering personalized instruction, inclusive teaching approaches, and favourable atmospheres for skill development.

Key Word: Dedicated Education units; EDU; Nursing student; clinical nursing education; Nursing Students; students' experience.

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I. Introduction

In the 1990s, the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Flinders University in Australia introduced the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) models of clinical education. DEUs are clinical sites within hospitals where experienced registered staff nurses, recognized for their clinical expertise, are trained and mentored by academic faculty to serve as clinical instructors for nursing students (Edgecombe, Wotton, Gonda, & Mason, 1999; Gonda, Wotton, Edgecombe, & Mason, 1999). This model was developed in response to nursing faculty shortages and the need to strengthen partnerships between academia and practice, improve clinical education for students, and better prepare future nurses for real-world practice (Gonda et al., 1999). The DEU model is founded on mutual respect, trust, and a formal agreement between the two organizations involved to invest in and foster a supportive clinical learning environment (Mulready-Shick, Kafel, Banister, & Mylott, 2009). The primary goals of the DEU model are to enhance student learning, promote evidence-based practice, and improve patient outcomes. Under this model, nursing students are paired with staff nurses who guide and teach them how to integrate theoretical knowledge and clinical skills acquired in the classroom into real-life practice. The collaborative approach of the DEU model involves nurse faculty dedicating their time to help students achieve their course objectives by challenging them to think critically and apply clinical reasoning skills to solve practical issues and reflect on their clinical judgment. Clinical training is a crucial aspect of undergraduate nursing education, especially considering the global shortage of nurses and the increasingly complex healthcare settings. Various clinical learning models exist, with the traditional model involving a clinical instructor supervising a group of six to eight students for a limited time period. However, this model often leads to unequal learning opportunities based on factors such as the unit's specialty and patient workload. In contrast, the DEU model creates dedicated units specifically designed to enhance nursing trainees' capacity and provide targeted learning opportunities. Students in DEUs have increased opportunities to develop skills, engage in diverse learning experiences, reinforce prior knowledge, and reflect on their learning. They also feel more accepted as integral team members and assume greater responsibility for their practice, leading to further learning opportunities. Reports from nursing students trained in DEUs indicate positive perceptions of their experiences,

a heightened sense of accountability for their learning, and an increased feeling of being a part of the nursing profession. Furthermore, nurses working in DEUs report positive learning experiences and greater satisfaction with students' professional growth. In a study describes the implementation and evaluation of the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) as an innovative model of clinical nursing education in Portland, United States, Moscato, Miller, Logsdon, Weinberg, and Chorpenning (2007) found both students and nurses expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program. Additionally, there was a significant increase in clinical capacity, which enabled the program to accommodate a larger number of enrolled students. The DEU also offers the advantage of direct learning from professional nurses and clinical officers, with expert clinical preceptors ensuring correct performance of duties and assessing students' abilities during the placement. In contrast, the traditional clinical education model often requires staff nurses to oversee a large number of students with varying learning objectives. Implementing DEUs necessitates the establishment of partnerships between academic institutions and healthcare agencies to create optimistic and progressive clinical education settings. These partnerships are crucial for the success of the DEU model, providing a platform for collaborative learning and enhancing the overall quality of nursing education.

II. Method

A scoping review was conducted using the framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) following the steps outlined in Table 1. Davis, Drey, and Gould (2009) highlighted the value of a scoping review as a useful tool for exploring evidence and providing a comprehensive overview of a subject. This approach is important because it establishes the objectives, methods, and documentation, thereby clarifying the process of conducting a literature review (Peters et al., 2015).

Table 1: Scoping Review Framework by Arksey and O'Malley (2005)

Stage	Description
1	Identifying the research question
2	Identifying relevant studies
3	Study selection
4	Charting the data
5	Collating, summarizing, and reporting the results
6	Consultation (optional)

Identifying the research question: To accurately define the scope of the research, it is crucial to formulate a research question. In this case, the following question guided the scoping review:

" What is the impact of the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) teaching model on the experience of nursing students?"

Identifying relevant studies: The research question helps establish specific inclusion criteria for the scoping review, enhances the success of the literature search, and provides a clear structure for summarizing the review. To achieve this, the review question should incorporate the PCC (Population, Concept, Context) components (Peters et al., 2015).

Population: Student Nurses

Concept: Dedicated Education Units

Context: DEUs created through collaboration between nursing academia and healthcare agencies, with no geographical limitations.

The search strategy: The search strategy followed three steps, as recommended by JBI frameworks.

First Step: An initial search was conducted in two databases, MEDLINE and CINAHL, to review text words in the title, scientific abstract, and index terms for identifying keywords for the subsequent steps.

Second Step: Once the main keywords and search terms were identified, they were utilized in all the databases included in the search, such as Academic Search Premier, MEDLINE, CINAHL, ERIC, and the British Education Index. These databases encompass peer-reviewed journals relevant to the study and cover a significant portion of nursing education sources (Lee, Watson, & Watson, 2019). The research timeframe was limited from 2013 to 2023, and the search was restricted to English language publications. Boolean operation 'or' was used between each PCC component, followed by 'and' to link the search results for a more accurate outcome.

Third Step: The reference lists of selected studies were examined to identify additional papers relevant to the research topic.

Study selection: Once the studies were identified, their applicability was assessed based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

III. Result

A scoping review was conducted to compile and analyse primary studies examining the students' experiences in Dedicated Education Units model. Through a comprehensive literature search across multiple databases, including Academic Search Premier, MEDLINE, CINAHL, ERIC, and the British Education Index, a total of 491 primary studies were initially identified. After removing 273 duplicate studies in addition to 11 studies for other reasons such as reports, 207 studies remained. Upon careful evaluation of titles and abstracts, 164 studies were deemed irrelevant to the research topic and excluded. From the remaining 43 full-text articles assessed for eligibility, 27 were excluded as they did not align with the subject matter. A thorough analysis of the full texts of the remaining 16 studies was conducted to assess their quality. Ultimately, only 9 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in this scoping review. The entire process is visually represented in Figure 1, which depicts a flow diagram. The subsequent section provides a detailed list of the included studies, along with their respective characteristics table number 2.

Figure no1: PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram

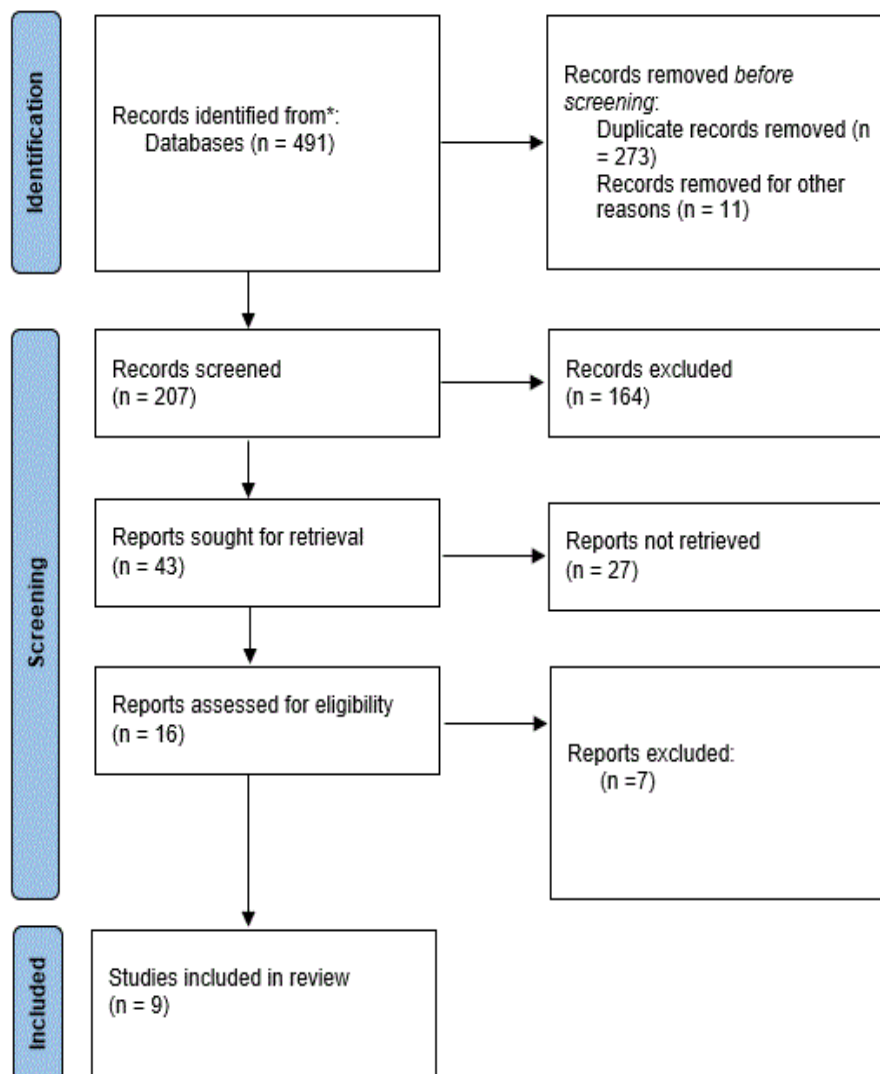


Table no 2 included studies

Author(s)	Title	Year	Study types
Williams, Al Hmaimat, AlMekkawi, Melhem, and Mohamed (2021)	Implementing dedicated nursing clinical education unit: Nursing students' and preceptors' perspectives	2021	Mixed methods study
Dimino, Louie, Banks, and Mahon (2020)	Exploring the Impact of a Dedicated Education Unit on New Graduate Nurses' Transition to Practice	2020	Mixed methods study
Bittner, Campbell, and Gunning (2020)	Impact of a Dedicated Education Unit Experience on Critical Thinking Development in Nursing Students	2020	Descriptive study
Rusch, McCafferty, Schoening, Hercinger, and Manz (2018)	Impact of the dedicated education unit teaching model on the perceived competencies and professional attributes of nursing students	2018	Descriptive study
George, Locasto, Pyo, and Cline (2017)	Effect of the dedicated education unit on nursing student self-efficacy: A quasi-experimental research study	2017	Quasi-experimental exploratory study
Smyer, Gatlin, Tan, Tejada, and Feng (2015)	Academic Outcome Measures of a Dedicated Education Unit Over Time: Help or Hinder	2015	Quasi-experimental
Nishioka, Coe, Hanita, and Moscato (2014)	Dedicated Education Unit: Student Perspectives	2014	Mixed methods study
Vnenchak, K., Sperling, M. L., Kelley, K., Petersen, B., Silverstein, W., Petzoldt, O., ... & Kowalski, M. O. (2019)	Dedicated Education Unit Improving Critical Thinking and Anxiety	2019	A Longitudinal Study
Mulready-Shick, Flanagan, Banister, Mylott, and Curtin (2013)	Evaluating dedicated education units for clinical education quality	2013	Randomized Controlled Trial

IV. Discussion

In this scoping review the studies demonstrated an improvement in students' experiences within the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU). To begin, it would be helpful to consider students' perceptions of their clinical learning experiences in a dedicated education unit (DEU). The students participating in Nishioka et al. (2014) study expressed positive perceptions of the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) as a high-quality clinical learning environment that offered several advantages over traditional clinical education models. They found that DEUs provided a more inclusive and consistently committed approach to teaching compared to traditional units. The students appreciated the guidance and personalized instruction provided by the DEU Clinical Instructors (CIs). They also observed that the learning atmosphere, leadership style of the nursing managers, and nursing care in DEUs were more favourable in comparison to traditional education units. Conversely, the quality of the learning environment in traditional models varied depending on the assigned staff nurse. The students, as well as other stakeholders, believed that DEUs offered greater opportunities for learning communication, teamwork, time management, and other essential professional skills necessary for successful nursing careers. In contrast, traditional units were perceived as more constrained, with a primary focus on specific clinical tasks and fewer opportunities for collaboration with other nurses and the patient's clinical team. Notably, significant differences in student perceptions of the clinical team were found between DEUs and traditional units, particularly in medical/surgical and psychiatric/mental health settings. In these patient care units, students reported that DEU team meetings fostered a more collegial, supportive atmosphere that focused on addressing student learning needs, in contrast to team meetings in traditional units.

In addition, Mulready-Shick et al. (2013) study's findings underscored that nursing students in Dedicated Education Units (DEUs) reported significantly more positive clinical learning experiences in comparison to students in traditional clinical education models. DEU students perceived higher quality instructors and greater learning opportunities within the DEU environment. They also observed greater growth in clinical learning, nursing knowledge, clinical skills, and ethical and professional behaviours compared to their counterparts in traditional units. Furthermore, students in DEUs noted more frequent opportunities for developing competencies in quality and safety, such as teamwork, collaboration, informatics, quality improvement, and safety. These findings highlight the advantages of the DEU model in optimizing clinical learning and promoting the development of essential competencies for nursing practice. Additionally, the analysis indicated that DEU students spent more time engaging in instructional coaching with their clinical instructors during patient care compared to students in traditional units. This suggests that the DEU model facilitates increased instructional activities at the point of care, potentially enhancing the learning experience for students. Overall, the study conclusively demonstrates that DEUs have a positive impact on students' perceptions of their clinical learning experiences and contribute to their professional growth and competency development. The findings provide support for the effectiveness of the DEU model in nursing education. A

recent study by Bittner et al. (2020) found a significant enhancement in students' Critical Thinking Disposition (CTD) levels in the DEU compared to non-DEU groups. These findings highlight the positive impact of the DEU model on critical thinking skills, with improvements observed across various categories. The results provide support for the effectiveness of the DEU model in fostering critical thinking abilities. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study by Bittner et al. (2020), which included a convenience sample from a single associate degree nursing program. Additionally, due to limited access to DEUs, not all students had the opportunity to experience a DEU every semester. These findings in the line with Vnenchak et al. (2019), the objective of this study was to examine the impact of the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) model on critical thinking skills, anxiety levels, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and overall confidence in student nurses over time. The results indicated that the DEU model contributed to an enhancement of critical thinking skills and a reduction in anxiety levels among student nurses. Furthermore, it led to increased levels of self-confidence, self-efficacy, and overall confidence from the initial assessment to 12 months after graduation. The decrease in anxiety and the sustained presence of self-efficacy were identified as factors supporting the improvement of critical thinking abilities and successful performance. The study underscored the significance of focusing on professional growth, particularly during the transition from being a student to becoming a professional nurse. The findings highlighted an opportunity for enhancing the process of professional development during this transitional phase. Participants in the DEU reported lower levels of anxiety and increased self-efficacy, self-confidence, and overall confidence throughout their involvement in the program. The study also addressed the integration of DEU concepts into the clinical institution's onboarding program for newly graduated nurses. Lessons derived from the DEU study were incorporated into the training program to benefit the professional development of newly graduated nurses within the clinical institution. Similarly, in the study conducted by Dimino et al. (2020) aims to explore the impact of a Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) on the transition to practice of New Graduate Nurses (NGNs), the findings also underscored the positive influence of the DEU in preparing NGNs for their professional roles. However, it is worth noting that approximately 30% of NGNs from both the DEU and traditional clinical teaching models expressed feelings of discomfort and a lack of confidence in various aspects, such as communicating with physicians, seeking help, managing time, and possessing the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure patient safety. On the other hand, NGNs with DEU experiences emphasized the value of their DEU experiences, perceiving them as helpful or even essential. Additionally, alumni participants recognized the DEU model as supportive in fostering confidence and cultivating clinical and leadership skills that are critical for a seamless transition from student to practicing nurse.

George et al. (2017) study aimed to evaluate and compare self-efficacy scores following clinical education between students in Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) and Traditional Education Unit (TEU) models. Both groups exhibited higher self-efficacy scores after engaging in clinical activities, and the differences in scores within each group were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that both the DEU and TEU models resulted in improvements in self-efficacy scores, supporting the utilization of both models for clinical education. However, when comparing the mean self-efficacy scores between students who experienced the DEU model and those who experienced the TEU model, the DEU students demonstrated significantly higher scores ($p = 0.012$). This finding aligns with previous research conducted by Hannon et al. (2012) found that students in a DEU exhibited increased self-confidence, a component of self-efficacy. Ransie and Grealish (2007) also discovered that DEU students reported heightened learning and self-confidence due to acceptance by clinicians and shared experiences. Assessing student outcomes based on self-efficacy perceptions is crucial, as high self-efficacy is associated with undertaking challenging tasks, investing greater effort, and persisting in the face of obstacles. It is also linked to commitment and sustained effort in rigorous educational pursuits. Previous research conducted by Cheraghi, Hassani, Yaghmaei, and Alavi-Majed (2009) demonstrated that self-efficacy reliably predicts successful performance among nursing students. Educational models that foster self-efficacy, such as the DEU, play a critical role in effectively preparing students for healthcare professions like nursing. The findings of this study provide support for the DEU as a high-quality clinical education model that enhances students' perceived self-efficacy. The findings of Williams et al. (2021) study indicated positive experiences with the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) as an effective clinical teaching model for nursing students. The students reported being more attentive during their practice, appreciated the organized learning units, and had a clear understanding of the expectations of both the DEU and the university. However, some students expressed a need for improved support from nursing preceptors and more engaging learning activities. The implementation of the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) model is argued to provide valuable insights into its impact on supporting the role of nursing preceptors and enhancing students' learning opportunities and hands-on experiences. To achieve the positive effects of the DEU model, continuous collaboration between healthcare facilities, nursing education programs, and faculty is necessary. Several factors that influence students' learning need to be addressed. These include preparing competent nursing teams, ensuring the availability of engaging learning activities, promoting constructive feedback from students, fostering student motivation, and selecting nursing preceptors who are

enthusiastic about teaching and willing to align their roles and responsibilities to effectively support their students. According to Rusch et al. (2018) study, the group participating in the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) model outperformed students in the traditional clinical teaching model in 26 out of 33 specific competencies and professional attributes. These findings suggest that the DEU model is more effective in promoting knowledge, competency, and professional attribute development compared to the traditional clinical teaching model. The observed differences between DEU and traditional model students provide evidence supporting the continued implementation of the DEU model. DEU students demonstrated higher proficiency in psychomotor skills, assessment, time management, communication with the healthcare team, and assuming responsibility for patient care. The DEU model offers increased opportunities for clinical skill development, which may contribute to higher levels of clinical confidence and competence among DEU students. On the other hand, traditional model students scored lower in the cognitive domain, particularly in areas such as pathophysiology, lab values, and pharmacology, indicating the need for improvement in new graduate knowledge and overall readiness for practice. While significant differences were found between the DEU and traditional model groups in various competencies and attributes, there were no significant differences in five areas. These areas, which encompass communication with patients and families, professional and ethical behaviour, delivering culturally competent care, delivering age-appropriate care, and documentation of nursing care, were influenced not solely by the DEU model but also by other aspects of the nursing program that all students were equally exposed to.

On the other hand, Smyer et al. (2015) observed no significant impact of specialized educational units on academic outcomes. The study conducted a comparison between students in a Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) and students in a traditional clinical model regarding academic outcome measures. The findings revealed that there were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of baseline measures or immediate post-DEU experience measures of academic outcomes. Moreover, there were no notable disparities in scores related to critical thinking, nursing process, and quality and safety measures. However, a significant time effect was observed for several academic outcome measures, including Critical Thinking, Nursing Process Planning, and Nursing Process Evaluation. This indicates that the scores on these measures changed over time for both the DEU and traditional clinical students. Importantly, there was no significant main effect of group or a time-by-group interaction effect. This suggests that the average scores on the outcome measures were similar for both groups, regardless of the semester. Additionally, the trajectories of the outcomes did not differ between the two groups, indicating that their scores followed a similar pattern over time, with some minor fluctuations from one semester to another.

V. Conclusion

In summary, the reviewed studies consistently demonstrate that the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) model has a positive impact on nursing students' experiences and outcomes in clinical learning. DEUs are perceived by students as high-quality learning environments, offering personalized instruction, inclusive teaching approaches, and favourable atmospheres for skill development. DEUs foster a collegial and supportive atmosphere, leading to enhanced communication and collaboration. Students in DEUs report more positive clinical learning experiences, increased growth in clinical knowledge and skills, and the development of ethical and professional behaviours. The DEU model also enhances critical thinking skills, self-efficacy, and confidence among nursing students through increased learning opportunities, engagement in instructional coaching, and reduced anxiety levels. It supports the successful transition from student to professional nurse by cultivating clinical and leadership skills. While the DEU model outperforms traditional models in various competencies and professional attributes, it is important to note that it may not address all aspects of nursing education. Efforts should be made to improve support from nursing preceptors, provide engaging learning activities, and address factors that influence student learning. Continuous collaboration between healthcare facilities, nursing education programs, and faculty is crucial for effective implementation. Although one study did not find a significant impact on academic outcomes, the majority of the reviewed studies support the effectiveness of the DEU model in promoting knowledge, competency, and professional attribute development. The DEU model offers increased opportunities for clinical skill development, while traditional models may benefit from improvements in new graduate knowledge and overall readiness for practice. Overall, the findings strongly support the DEU model as a valuable and effective approach to clinical education in nursing. It enhances students' perceived learning experiences, critical thinking skills, self-efficacy, and professional growth, preparing them for successful nursing careers. Further research and ongoing collaboration are needed to refine and improve the DEU model to meet the evolving needs of nursing students and the healthcare industry.

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