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*European principles of nursing education as a guarantee  
of the quality of care*

The essence of contemporary academic education of nurses is to provide the future graduates with indispensable knowledge and practical skills. However, these two complementary areas have already been defined and described in a fairly detailed way. Now it is time to make some preliminary evaluation of the objectives, the tasks and the results.

Basic principles of nursing education included in the document developed by the UE and systematically implemented and adopted in individual member states have been demonstrated. A common philosophy of education on assumption should influence the character and scope of services performed by nurses. First of all, it should influence their quality.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

The present work uses the method of critical thinking and document analysis which focuses on the European Directives of Nursing Education.

SYSTEM OF NURSING EDUCATION IN EUROPEAN DOCUMENTS  
– FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

According to European documents, nursing has a particular mission to fulfil in society. Its essence is to assist people in the promotion of health in a way that develops in them mechanisms of providing help to themselves and others (individual persons and/or groups of people) (1, 2, 4). The professional care in health, illness and handicap requires a conscious and purposeful influence on factors (physical, psychical, social, cultural and spiritual) which directly or indirectly control the subjective perception, the awareness of one's own state, the way one deals with them in all aspects of human life. The relation between the nurse and the process of caring, which is inherent in the mission, has a unique value. Only the nurse (among the representatives of all caring professions) has been theoretically and practically prepared to care delivery. Prophylaxis and promotion of health are crucial activities in the nurse's work; in practice, however, they are undertaken and successfully carried out by a large group of the so-called caring professions on the shrinking job market.

The understanding of nursing and the nurse's role constitute the base of all considerations (1). It has been commonly accepted that nursing is to be understood as art and science and so it must be analysed from the point of view of these two categories. The practical activity of the nurse requires using the knowledge (the science of nursing, humanistic knowledge) and the skills which are profession specific.

The authors of the European strategies emphasise the need to “set” the content of professional education on nursing (the science of nursing) and its scientific foundations. Beside the clearly formulated proposition, they outline the prospective situation which may result from not following it. Nursing might be then understood very narrowly – mainly in terms of the nurse’s job. Even though it will retain its caring character, the so-called common sense will replace the deep, verified knowledge which should constitute its essence. The nurse’s activities will be limited to a set of simple, often versatile actions and will consist mainly in providing services to an individual in need (nursing service) as well as to the members of other caring professions (e.g. doctors or clinical psychologists). However, in order to perform the former and the latter it is enough to follow one’s intuition and copy the actions of others (good craft; good craftsman) (2).

It is assumed that the basic content of education should focus on two mutually related areas: nursing and health (1, 2, 3). The focus on nursing translates itself onto its implementation in the form of creating rational and friendly attitude towards the cared. The rationality is understood as a degree of purposeful (often aimed) application of specific concepts/models of nursing which are carried out in practice in the process of delivering care to an individual person and/or a group of people.

In the process of nursing education the emphasis is put on knowledge and practical skills. They are the variables which determine the scope of the nurse’s qualifications to carry out particular duties. The development of professional competencies constitutes the essence of the contemporary system of nursing education (competencies training). It prepares nurses to take decisions concerning the way care is planned and delivered. A competent nurse is a person who is authorized to perform tasks and actions in relation to a single individual or whole groups of people who are healthy, prone to illness or ill.

It is important that a student understands that the purpose of the process of education is not to become skillful in compiling knowledge from various fields (e.g. psychology, sociology or pedagogy) but rather in discovering for what reason and to what extent this knowledge has been assimilated by nursing. The students must be sure that they study nursing not for the fact of having been admitted to the course but because of the adopted and demonstrated philosophy of education. Compilation of the most valuable truths will not produce an outcome in the form of nursing (knowledge, science, theory) (1). It is necessary to stress that nursing (including caring) to which young people are being prepared, within the EU directives, must be based on the principles and values of individualistic and holistic nursing care, including its interdisciplinary character.

One can speak about the desired outcome of the process of competencies based education if a nurse can:

- understand what nursing and health is and how these two terms are mutually related and explain that to others (e.g. professional groups that she works with, patients, a particular community)
- implement the process of care in practice, make an objectivised evaluation of the nursing care results
- record the gathered data and the care results, etc., and communicate (with the object of her/his care, her/his own professional group, other members of the therapeutic team she/he belongs to and co-creates) in a traditional way (through verbal and non-verbal messages) and via electronic means
- plan her/his own work and the one with the object of care and determine the priorities in caring about individual persons and groups of people
- make decisions and be aware of their consequences as well as understand the changes undergoing in the patient’s state, in a given health center, in health protection, etc. In her attitude towards all the changes she/he will exhibit rationality and openness
- co-operate in a care delivering team, etc.

## CONCLUSIONS

High quality of nursing care is the purpose in itself. However, the quality created by the realization of definite principles of nursing education, common for all EU countries (and the Candidate countries), is challenge and simultaneously a particular form of support that is significant for a contemporary and united nursing. European assumptions of nursing education should be treated as a reference point for theoretical-practical initiatives and a significant criterion for evaluation of the obtained results.

## REFERENCES

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## SUMMARY

The European documents concerning the assumptions for nursing education point to the need for their rational evaluation within the realized curricula. The purpose of the study is demonstration of basic principles of nursing education included in the document developed by the UE and systematically implemented in individual member states. A common philosophy of education on assumption should influence the character and scope of services performed by the nurse. First of all it should influence their quality. The basic method of research used in the study was the critical thinking and document analysis (European Directives for Nursing Education). Conclusion: high quality of nursing care is the purpose in itself. However, the quality created by the realization of definite principles of nursing education, common for all the EU countries, is a challenge and simultaneously a particular form of support that is significant for a contemporary and united nursing. European assumptions of nursing education should be treated as a reference point for theoretical-practical initiatives and a significant criterion for evaluation of the obtained result.

### Europejskie założenia kształcenia pielęgniarek zabezpieczeniem jakości opieki

Europejskie założeniach opracowane zostały dla potrzeb kształcenia pielęgniarek w całej zjednoczonej Europie. Są to wytyczne, które należy postrzegać i analizować przez pryzmat programu realizowanego w danym kraju. Celem pracy było ukazanie podstawowych założeń kształcenia pielęgniarek, zawartych w dokumencie wypracowanym przez Unię Europejską i systematycznie wdrażanych w poszczególnych krajach członkowskich. Wspólna filozofia kształcenia niejako z założenia ma się przekładać na zakres i charakter usług świadczonych przez pielęgniarkę, przede wszystkim jednak na ich jakość. Za podstawową metodę badawczą przyjęto krytyczną analizę dokumentów, w tym przede wszystkim europejskich, dotyczących założeń kształcenia pielęgniarek. Wysoka jakość opieki pielęgniarskiej jest celem samym w sobie. Natomiast kreowana poprzez realizację określonych założeń kształcenia pielęgniarek, wspólnych dla wszystkich krajów członkowskich Unii (oraz

oczekujących na przyjęcie), staje się wyzwaniem, a jednocześnie szczególną formą wsparcia, istotną dla współczesnego zjednoczonego pielęgniarstwa. Europejskie założenia kształcenia pielęgniarek należy traktować jako punkt odniesienia inicjatyw teoretyczno-praktycznych, a tym samym istotne kryterium ewaluacji uzyskiwanych wyników.