

Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences, Medical University of Lublin

WIESŁAWA CIECHANIEWICZ, JOLANTA GÓRAJEK-JÓŻWIK

*The implementation of the European principles of nursing education
in the theory of nursing course*

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 (1, 6). It is assumed that the basic content of education should focus on two mutually related areas: nursing and health (1, 6, 7). The focus on nursing translates itself onto its implementation in the form of creating rational and friendly attitude towards the care. The rationality is understood as a degree of purposeful application of specific concepts/models of nursing which are carried out in practice in the process of delivering care to individual person and/or group of people.

The academic syllabus of the nursing education course at the Medical University of Lublin (Poland) was expanded in the first half of the 1980s by introducing certain issues which were later developed into the course of the Theory of Nursing. This was a forerunner of a new academic course, that went a few years ahead on the time when the whole academic community appreciated the idea of setting up a new course of study, and finally a separate Nursing Faculty that would work within the structures of the Nursing Department. The solution was beneficial for nursing as it created the opportunity to give the nurse's professional activities a solid theoretical foundation of verified knowledge.

The aim of the work is to show the scope and character of the relationship between the principles of contemporary nursing education specified in the EU documents and the Theory of Nursing course objectives and content. The present analysis is justified for two reasons: the changes in the nursing education system (in agreement with the EU objectives) and the ten years of teaching the Theory of Nursing.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

The basic method used in the study was the critical analysis of three groups of documents: European directives for nursing education, the syllabi that have been used in academic education of nurses in Poland since 2000 and the objectives and content of the Theory of Nursing course that has been taught in the Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences in the Medical University of Lublin since 1993.

THE ESSENCE OF EDUCATION IN THE "THEORY OF NURSING" COURSE

The Theory of Nursing that has been taught at the Medical University of Lublin for almost 10 years as a separate course is based on the individually developed syllabus and its several modifications have been the resultant of various variables. Each new version of the syllabus was directly proportional to the growing interest in scientific nursing and the possibility to translate the theoretical considerations onto the needs of professional practice.

In the process of teaching the course, it has been important from the very beginning to show the essence of the philosophy of nursing, its complexity, the concepts/models of care and consequently, of very many practical solutions. It was a crucial element for the process of caring or, in other words, the professional activities undertaken for the sake of the object of care (healthy, prone to illness or ill). Polish nursing was faced not so much with the chance to discover the truth that points to the practical aspect of theory in empirical sciences, but rather to verify it on its own grounds (2).

The theoretical side of nursing has become a new challenge for the academic nursing community. The fact it has been little known, little discovered, was a particularly inspiring factor. It created the possibility to study the nursing itself instead of only what affects it directly or indirectly. The documented solid theoretical grounds of the worldwide nursing have inspired the native nursing community to learn about them, to discover new options that stood before practical nursing. This in turn translated itself onto the 'philosophy' of the didactic syllabus that was realized within the "Theory of Nursing" course. The content of the syllabus allowed to find out and understand such truths as:

1. The essence of contemporary nursing (from historical and theoretical perspective), nursing understood as a new scientific discipline, the relations between scientific activities, and practical nursing.

2. The essence and meaning of the philosophy of nursing, the grounds that are indispensable for its creation, the differences between the philosophy of nursing and an individual, subjective "philosophy" of nursing formulated by particular nurses, in most cases for their own needs.

3. The value and "strength" of professional nursing, based on specific philosophical principles, characteristic of nursing in a given country, its region, and a health care centre, and as such based on certain unique values.

4. The system of concepts that are essential for professional nursing, important for their understanding as values *per se*, but also as basic elements of the theory of nursing (common to many theories and novel to a specific or selected one) as well as demonstrating the knowledge of terminology, which is a basic condition to be met in order to communicate with members of one's own professional group and/or in a multi-professional, interdisciplinary caring team.

5. Selected theories of nursing (starting with "the core" for the philosophy of Polish nursing: F. Nightingale's, V. Henderson's, D. Orem's, followed then by H. Peplau's, B. Newman's, C. Roy's, M. Rogers's, etc.), presented in a broad context of science and the scientificity of nursing practice.

6. The views of theoreticians, authors of selected theories of nursing, upon the essence of nursing and the role of the nurse in health care (3).

Until recently the Theory of Nursing course taught at the department of Nursing and Health Sciences at the Medical University of Lublin encompassed three complementary theoretical thematic sections (with practical elements: hospital ward practice). From the perspective of the ten-year practice, the changes in the Theory of Nursing course have been dynamic in nature. If they were to be shown graphically, they would resemble Gausse's curve with respect to both the scope of the teaching content (from one thematic section at the beginning of the course, through four, to the two which are part of the current syllabus) and the allocated time (45 hours, 155 hours, 120 hours and 50 hours respectively). The changes in question have been determined mainly by the need to adjust the academic syllabus of nursing education (so far the four-year MN course) for the diploma nurses, to the current one, used in the EC, namely the three-year license programme for the secondary school leavers with the possibility to continue the studies for the next two years at the MN course (3+2 years) (8).

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE EUROPEAN SYSTEM OF NURSING EDUCATION VERSUS THE "NURSING THEORY"

The relationship between the EU directives and the content included in the Theory of Nursing course already at the beginning of the 1990s, has been given here a tabularic representation. The content of the EU syllabus (given in the form of entries and divided into three thematic categories) has been juxtaposed with the information concerning its presence or absence from the Theory of Nursing course. Additionally, the amount of time allocated to the teaching of a given subject in consecutive years has been stated.

Table 1. Nursing and the delivery of nursing

EU directives The content of nurses education	Theory of nursing course			
	the number of teaching hours allocated to a particular issue			
	45	155	120	50
• The essence of nursing	+	+	+	+
• Development of nursing knowledge	+	+	+	+
• The notion of care (in broad terms)	+	+	+	+
• Process of care	+	+	+	--
• Models of nursing	+	+	+	+
• Factors influencing development of nursing practice (other than organizational)	+	+	+	+
• Scientific research and its influence on practice (on nursing)	+	+	+	+
• Implementation of nursing principles	+	+	+	+
• Diagnostic research and corresponding nursing activities	included in other courses' content			
• Methods of treatment and obtained results (according to the nurse's duties)				
• Rehabilitation, pharmacology, first aid delivery (in the context of nurse's duties)				

Table 2. The communicative skills

• Communicating in nursing and in the delivery of nursing (with various cultural and ethnic groups)	+	+	+	--
• Using the information • Using the media	included in other courses' content			

Table 3. Professional, ethical and moral issues in nursing

• Autonomy, tasks, responsibility	+	+	+	+
• Decision making (the choice of the model/concept of nursing; other than management and organization)	+	+	+	+
• Cooperation with other professional groups (for the sake of broadly understood care)	+	+	+	+
• Notions, principles and traditions of ethical thought • Ethical codes and moral dilemmas in nursing • The rights of individuals • The role of organs of state and self-governments	included in other courses' content			

It is obvious from the point of view of the teaching process that the growing number of hours creates an opportunity to develop and treat the presented issues in greater detail, to consolidate the knowledge by the increased active participation of students in a variety of activities. The changes that bring about certain limitations have a negative and limiting effect on the amount of the taught content.

The detailed analysis and evaluation of the data presented in Tables 1–3 extends beyond the scope of this paper. It must be noted, however, that the farthest reaching recent cuts affected two complementary issues, namely the process of nursing and communicating in nursing. Despite that, however, their content has not been altogether neglected in the process of nursing education in Poland.

DISCUSSION

To our mind, the essence, assumptions and aims of individualized nursing constitute a resultant of the process of nursing, the theory of nursing and Primary nursing. Figuratively speaking, the process of nursing supports one or a few selected theories of nursing (depending on the object of care, a specific group of patients, a hospital ward, etc.). It is like a scaffolding which determines the fact that individualized nursing can rest on specific knowledge and be combined with science.

Primary nursing, in turn, is a clearly defined organizational solution that draws on the process of nursing along with what should be ascribed to it, which is a carefully selected theory or theories. That means that the process of nursing, theories of nursing and Primary nursing are basic variables that affect the understanding of nursing, a triad which determines its essence in practice (4).

The questions concerning the theory, the process, etc., inevitably lead to questions concerning nursing. It is assumed that nursing is an interactive process that develops between the nursed one and the nursing one. The mutual relationship manifests itself in the form of the sent and received messages and is an immanent value of nursing (nursing care included). That results from the very nature of care. The essence of a person to person relationship is a fundamental and unquestionable value of nursing. What is more, the character of the relationship depends on the nurse who has been prepared both theoretically and practically to communicate in a proper way (meaning therapeutic) with the object of her/his care. The process of communication (its scope and character) undergoes professional evaluation; it is analyzed and thoroughly researched within nursing and for the benefit of nursing (2).

The interactivity of nursing (and of nursing care) is a dominating element in many theories, it is embedded in the essence of nursing and Primary Nursing. For this reason, it is possible to speak about a unique character of communication in nursing. As has been revealed in practice and in various analyses, the content concerning communication, which is taught in such courses as psychology and psychotherapy, has had a complementary value in relation to the content included in the Theory of Nursing course (5).

CONCLUSIONS

The comparative analysis of the contents and objectives of the European principles of nursing education and the Theory of Nursing course that has been taught for almost 10 years at the Medical University of Lublin points to a significant convergence between the two. On the other hand, the results of the historical analysis are more advantageous for the Theory of Nursing course, placing it ahead of the European system. It speaks very well of the environment in which the idea of including such content was born and successfully implemented in practice. The experience gained in the process (educational, scientific, including various publications) was significant enough to create the basis for the nurses' education in the three-year license programme.

REFERENCES

1. Aleksander M. F.: International Competencies for the Generalist Nurse. ICN, Copenhagen 2001.
2. Górajek-Jóźwik J.: The Theory of Nursing in the Academic Education of Nurses. Ann. Acad. Med. Silles. supp. 30. 2000.
3. Górajek-Jóźwik J., Ciechaniewicz W.: The Theory of Nursing Syllabus. In: The Guide for Studying the Theory of Nursing, ed.: W. Ciechaniewicz, The Department of Nursing, Medical University of Lublin, Lublin 1995.
4. Górajek-Jóźwik J. et al.: Teaching nursing at the academic level – Theoretical principles and practical possibilities. In: Selected Nursing Issues, ed.: L. Wołowicka, The Department of Nursing and Health Sciences, Medical University of Poznań, 1993.
5. Łączak M.: The essence of communication in the patient-nurse-physician relation. The manuscript of an MN thesis. Medical University of Lublin, 2002.
6. Salva J.: Nursing in Action. Regional publications WHO, 48, 1993.
7. WHO European Strategy for Nursing and Midwifery and Training. Copenhagen (<http://www.dk/nursing>)
8. Wrońska I. et al.: (ed.) The Plan and the Syllabus of Teaching at the Two-level Nursing Studies. The Department of Nursing, Medical University of Lublin, 2001.

SUMMARY

The content included in 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 to show the scope and character of the relationship between the assumptions of modern nursing education and the programme of education included in the syllabus of the Theory of Nursing. The course has been taught in the Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences for over ten years. The collected resource materials and the experience confirm the dynamic nature of the relationship. The basic research method used in the study was the critical analysis of three groups of documents: European directives for nursing education, the syllabi that have been used in academic education of nurses in Poland since 2000 and the objectives and content of the Theory of Nursing course that has been taught in the Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences in the Medical University of Lublin since 1993. The analysis conclusively resulted in the statement that there is a convergence between the assumptions and the idea of education contained in the Theory of Nursing syllabus.

Odzwierciedlenie europejskich założeń kształcenia pielęgniarek w teorii pielęgniarstwa jako przedmiocie nauczania

W treściach zawartych w europejskich dokumentach dotyczących kształcenia pielęgniarek zwraca się uwagę na konieczność odzwierciedlenia ich w realizowanych programach. Celem pracy jest pokazanie zakresu i charakteru związku zachodzącego pomiędzy założeniami nowoczesnego kształcenia pielęgniarek a treściami zawartymi w programie przedmiotu teoria pielęgniarstwa. Przedmiot ten został stworzony od podstaw w Wydziale Pielęgniarstwa i Nauk o Zdrowiu Akademii Medycznej w Lublinie i jest w nim z powodzeniem realizowany od ponad dziesięciu lat. Do celów pracy wykorzystano metodę analizy krytycznej, której poddano trzy grupy dokumentów: europejskie założenia kształcenia pielęgniarek, program akademickiego kształcenia pielęgniarek realizowany w Polsce od 2000 roku

oraz cele i treści przedmiotu teorii pielęgniarstwa. W wyniku przeprowadzonej analizy stwierdzono istotną zbieżność pomiędzy założeniami kształcenia pielęgniarek zawartymi w europejskich dokumentach a tym, co od ponad dziesięciu już lat funkcjonuje w przedmiocie teoria pielęgniarstwa.