

Under the Background of Nursing Profession Accreditation: Construction of the Curriculum System for Nursing Humanities and Social Sciences

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Abstract: The spirit of humanities is the soul of education, determining its mission, objectives, and standards. Strengthening the humanistic quality education of nursing students is an essential task currently facing nursing education. Curriculum is the foundation of supporting humanistic education, and constructing a comprehensive curriculum system for humanities and social sciences is an effective way to carry out humanistic education. This study comprehensively analyzes the current status and existing deficiencies of the humanities and social sciences curriculum in nursing education in China, explores the direction of integration and optimization of the humanities and social sciences curriculum in nursing education, and constructs a set of undergraduate nursing curriculum system for humanities and social sciences based on the requirements of nursing profession accreditation. This system is student-centered and meets the support requirements for post-graduation training objectives.

1. Introduction

Humanistic spirit is the soul of education, determining its mission, objectives, and standards. As a practice centered on serving individuals, technology and humanities must be the two wings of nursing. Emphasizing the concept of humanistic care in nursing and the humanistic quality of nursing staff is increasingly becoming the development trend of modern nursing. Nursing humanities were first proposed by Watson in 1979^[1]. In 1998, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) revised the standards for higher education in nursing to emphasize the inclusion of humanities education in nursing curricula, signifying the essence of humanistic care in the nursing profession^[2].

As the reserve force of clinical nurses, the humanistic care ability of nursing students is closely related to the quality of care for patients with different characteristics. Strengthening the humanistic quality education of nursing students is an essential task currently facing nursing education. Curriculum is the foundation of supporting humanistic education, and constructing a comprehensive curriculum system is an effective way to carry out humanistic education^[3]. The curriculum system for nursing education in Chinese universities often focuses more on the cultivation of professional and technical competence, while the emphasis on the cultivation of students' humanistic quality

remains insufficient. The construction and reform of the nursing humanities curriculum system is one of the urgent issues to be addressed in nursing curriculum reform^[4].

2. Current Status of the Humanities and Social Sciences Curriculum in Chinese Universities

In terms of the nature of the curriculum setup for humanistic education, the elements of curriculum construction can be divided into two major categories: explicit curriculum and implicit curriculum. Explicit curriculum, also known as manifest curriculum, formal curriculum, or official curriculum, refers to the subjects and organized teaching activities officially included in the school's teaching plan to achieve related educational objectives^[5]. Currently, some universities in China have generally established nursing humanities courses, but there is inconsistency in system construction, total class hours, and sequence arrangement. The Nursing School of Peking Union Medical College has set up courses such as "Introduction to Psychology," "Human Development and Philosophy," "Interpersonal Communication," and "Life Ethics and Law"^[6]. The Nursing School of Sun Yat-sen University offers "Basic Psychology," "Nursing Ethics," "Nursing Management," and "Nursing Education" as required courses in the humanities, and also adds elective courses in the humanities^[7]. The Nursing School of Central South University collaborates with the School of Liberal Arts to offer interdisciplinary courses in nursing humanities and literary literacy, as well as practical training courses in makeup, etiquette, behavior norms, and language expression^[8]. The Nursing School of China Medical University has established humanistic courses such as "Interpersonal Communication," "Nursing Aesthetics," and "Introduction to Nursing"^[9]. Jining Medical University integrates humanistic education into professional courses and extracurricular activities, establishing a medical humanities education research base characterized by the local Confucian culture of the Kong-Meng hometown, and creating the "Da Ai Lecture Hall" as a brand of humanistic education^[10].

Surveys have shown that there is a significant variation coefficient in the professional and nursing humanities courses offered by different nursing schools. The overlap rate of course offerings is low, and the number of class hours is small. Among the 76 humanities courses offered by seven institutions, only 14.3% of the courses are actually taught. The number of class hours ranges from 16 to 256, with the highest number of courses offered being 22 and the lowest being 5. Moreover, the majority of humanities courses are public basic courses, with fewer courses focusing on nursing humanistic care and practical training^[11]. The total amount of explicit curriculum is significantly low, and the sequence of course arrangement lacks scientific guidance. Additionally, surveys indicate that the proportion of humanities and social sciences courses in the total curriculum in medical schools in China ranges from a high of 9.3% to a low of 4.6%, with an average of 7.5%, which is far behind the 20% to 25% proportion in European and American medical schools^[12-13]. Foreign humanities courses are often arranged according to certain principles, with courses like psychology and interpersonal communication scheduled before clinical internships, and courses like management and career development scheduled in the graduation year. The aim is to shape the humanistic quality of nursing students from the beginning of their nursing education and to maintain it throughout their education^[14]. Many domestic institutions lack a curriculum outline and explanation of the timing of course offerings, and further exploration is needed in terms of the rationality of course settings and the integration of theory and practice.

The establishment of explicit courses should consider not only the quality, types, and scheduling of humanities courses but also the emotional needs of nursing students. The curriculum system for humanistic quality courses should include eight modules: Chinese and Western culture, science and technology, Chinese and Western literature, art, philosophy, psychology and health, language, and comprehensive studies, as well as courses related to the humanistic environment^[15]. Ma Wanzhen et

al.^[16] analyzed data based on PUBMED and found that narrative nursing education, the combination of narrative nursing and palliative care, empathy, and nurse-patient relationships are current hot topics in nursing humanities education research.

Implicit curriculum refers to the curriculum presented in an indirect and implicit manner in the school context. This concept was first proposed by the American sociologist and educator Phillip W. Jackson and has gradually become an important dimension in curriculum theory research^[17]. The main focus of the implicit curriculum is the transmission of tacit, potential, and implicit values and spiritual concepts. Some foreign scholars have particularly concerned themselves with the nursing culture and the construction of a spirit of place within the implicit curriculum, defining nursing culture as “the generally held understandings, customs, rituals, and taken-for-granted aspects in the life space we call medical education.” The nursing culture and the spirit of place in the implicit curriculum are embodied in situations such as the campus environment, teacher personality, teacher-student relationships, artistic activities, academic lectures, and social practices. These elements have extensive permeability, potential influence, and unconscious educational value. Generally, these contents are not planned or anticipated. Therefore, many scholars have reached a consensus on increasing academic lectures, carrying out diverse campus cultural activities, and social practice activities in the nursing humanities curriculum system. However, from a practical dimension analysis, most nursing schools generally focus on the development of explicit courses in humanistic education, and the implicit curriculum in humanistic education has not yet received sufficient attention and effective development and utilization^[18].

3. Problems in the Education of Nursing Humanities and Social Sciences Courses in China

The accreditation standards for nursing education programs include four first-level indicators: Task and Management, Institutional Commitment and Resources, Curriculum and Teaching Practice, and Evaluation and Program Outcomes. This highlights the importance of curriculum system reform in nursing profession accreditation. According to the “National Standard for the Classification and Coding of Disciplines of the People’s Republic of China,” the humanities and social sciences category includes 19 first-level disciplines, including education. Nursing education, based on its own characteristics, should also include humanistic courses such as nursing psychology, nursing management, nursing aesthetics, nursing pedagogy, and nursing ethics^[19].

At the current stage in China, there are still some issues with the humanistic education in nursing, such as deficiencies in the cultivation of students’ interpersonal relationships, social adaptability, nurse-patient communication skills, and psychological qualities related to the profession^[20]. Research on the humanities curriculum and its optimization in nursing education in China is still in the exploratory stage. The specific issues include: (1) Educators pay less attention to nursing humanities courses; (2) There is a poor integration of theory and practice; (3) The structure of teachers’ humanistic knowledge is unreasonable; (4) There is a lack of campus humanistic environment; (5) There is a lack of a scientific evaluation system for humanistic quality^[21]. Therefore, the “National Nursing Development Plan Outline (2016-2020)” proposes to strengthen the humanistic education and professional quality education in nursing, to reinforce clinical practice teaching, and to focus on the cultivation of professional ethics, innovative spirit, and nursing practice ability, as well as to enhance the capacity building of the teaching staff and clinical practice teaching bases^[22]. In recent years, the issue of connecting nursing classroom teaching with clinical practice has drawn significant attention within the industry. Especially for nursing humanities courses, it is essential for nursing students to deeply understand the essence of nursing humanities through clinical practice. This requires cooperation between teaching hospitals and schools, introducing an integrated school-hospital training model to improve the quality of practical nursing

talent training.

4. Construction of the Nursing Humanities and Social Sciences Curriculum System Based on Professional Accreditation

Professional accreditation, as an important measure for ensuring the quality of higher education, prompts the shift of quality assurance in higher education institutions from external forces to an internal need for self-development, self-motivation, and self-discipline. European and American countries began to carry out nursing profession accreditation in the late 20th century, establishing standards and norms that align with the development of nursing professions in their respective countries. In China, the nursing profession accreditation is organized by the Expert Panel on Nursing Education under the Ministry of Education. Since the pilot program began in 2010, it has been recognized by an increasing number of nursing schools. Our university's nursing program successfully passed the nursing profession accreditation by the Ministry of Education in 2023.

The training objective of our nursing program is to fundamentally cultivate students with a strong sense of morality and responsibility, adapting to the needs of China's social and economic development and health care industry. We aim to develop students who are well-rounded in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education, and who possess a solid foundation in humanities, natural sciences, and basic medical knowledge. They should master the basic theories, knowledge, and skills of nursing, as well as stay updated with professional trends. Our graduates are expected to have good humanistic cultivation, communication skills, teamwork spirit, and a dedication to service. They should also possess basic clinical nursing abilities, preliminary teaching, management, scientific research, innovation, and entrepreneurship capabilities, and the ability to engage in lifelong learning. Our graduates are prepared to work in various medical and health care institutions, engaging in clinical nursing, preventive health care, and other related fields as applied professional talents.

4.1 Explicit Curriculum in Nursing Humanities and Social Sciences

The humanities and social sciences curriculum in nursing includes both general public humanities courses offered across the university and specific nursing humanities courses. The public humanities courses are general education for all students, regardless of their major, aiming to help students establish a correct worldview, outlook on life, values, and to cultivate basic language skills, literature, and art appreciation. This study mainly focuses on the curriculum system for nursing humanities and social sciences. The educational objectives of the nursing humanities and social sciences curriculum are closely aligned with the overall professional training goals, primarily aiming to cultivate students' core humanistic qualities, such as psychological management, humanistic care, communication, and educational skills. This enables students to embody the "benevolence" spirit of nursing, become nursing professionals with both character and ability, and promote personal growth and professional development. The overall design concept of the nursing humanities and social sciences curriculum is to keep pace with the times in determining the core subjects of nursing humanities, arranging the timing of course offerings reasonably, and strengthening the horizontal integration of humanities courses, professional courses, and practical training.

The nursing humanities and social sciences curriculum system comprises a total of 17 explicit courses, totaling 400 class hours, including 266 hours of theory and 134 hours of practice. There are 7 required courses and 10 elective courses. Except for "Introduction to Nursing," which is evaluated through a standard examination, other courses recommend a variety of assessment methods. The specific course settings are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 Detailed Settings of Explicit Courses in the Nursing Humanities and Social Sciences Curriculum

Semester	Course Name	Total Class Hours	Theory Class Hours	Practical Class Hours	Course Nature	Assessment Method
The First Semester	Introduction of Nursing	36	24	12	Required Course	Closed-book Examination
The Second Semester	Nursing Professional Ideological and Political Social Practice	16	4	12	Elective Course	Open-book Examination
The Third Semester	Nurse's Humanistic Cultivation	32	16	16	Required Course	Open-book Examination
	Nursing Psychology	24	20	4	Required Course	Open-book Examination
	Nursing Research	28	16	12	Required Course	Open-book Examination
	Nursing Ethics	24	16	8	Elective Course	Open-book Examination
	Nursing Informatics	24	16	8	Elective Course	Open-book Examination
	Evidence-based Nursing	16	12	4	Elective Course	Open-book Examination
	Narrative Medicine	24	6	18	Elective Course	Open-book Examination
The forth semester	Nursing Pedagogy	20	12	8	Required Course	Open-book Examination
	Nursing Management	32	24	8	Elective Course	Open-book Examination
	Social Medicine	24	16	8	Elective Course	Open-book Examination
The Eighth Semester	Multicultural Nursing	16	16	0	Elective Course	Open-book Examination
	Recent Advances in Nursing Science	20	16	4	Elective Course	Open-book Examination
	Life Cycle Health Management	16	12	4	Elective Course	Open-book Examination
	Professional English	24	20	4	Elective Course	Open-book Examination

	Health Education and Health Promotion	24	20	4	Elective Course	Open-book Examination
Total	18 Courses	400	266	134		

4.2 Implicit Curriculum in Nursing Humanities and Social Sciences

Humanistic knowledge is “knowing,” while humanistic spirit is “doing.” The cultivation of students’ humanistic quality requires the subtle influence of the environment. The implicit curriculum is embedded in various situations within the college. Taking the spirit of “Red Medical Thought” as the connotation and the trinity of humanistic knowledge, humanistic ability, and humanistic spirit as the core, we deeply integrate ideological and political education into various professional courses. Our college creates a favorable humanistic atmosphere by regularly inviting outstanding alumni (such as heroes in the fight against the epidemic, clinical nursing experts, and model workers) to give lectures, hosting the “5·12 Angel Style” special evening gala annually, organizing solemn hatting ceremonies and oath-taking activities before students’ internships, and planning the construction of the college’s environmental culture in various forms that students enjoy. Additionally, our college routinely conducts nursing skills competitions, teaching ability competitions for nursing students, PPT-making competitions, and anatomy identification competitions. We also hold irregular exhibitions of handmade works by nursing students, comprehensive quality competitions, and more. Through these meaningful on- and off-campus activities, we uncover students’ talents, enrich their lives, deepen their understanding of the meaning of life, and enhance their care and respect for human life. This encourages the internalization of the theoretical knowledge and professional values that students learn through practice.

In summary, the construction of this curriculum system is based on a comprehensive and systematic interpretation of the “Undergraduate Medical Education Standards – Nursing Specialty” and the latest edition of the “National Standards for Nursing Education Quality.” It is a humanities and social sciences curriculum system for undergraduate nursing students that aligns with the requirements of nursing profession accreditation, is student-centered, and supports the post-graduation training objectives. This system has received unanimous approval from accreditation experts and provides a theoretical basis for the setting of humanities and social sciences courses in undergraduate nursing schools in the future.

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