

Bridging the Theory-Education in Nursing

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Abstract: *Nursing researches contribute to occupational autonomy with the selection, updating and testing of qualified information. Progressive knowledge build-up in nursing strengthens nursing and distinguishes it from other disciplines. Establishing the link between research and theory and practice plays a decisive role in the development of a discipline. It is crucial to conduct scientific research in nursing and use the results obtained from these studies. As per the cited research examples given above, any theory should be used to contribute to the development of nursing profession added the fact that for those theories to be implemented in the field of education and research in universities, nursing educators/academicians are not required to attain any special certification or suffice any precondition specifically. Academic nurses should take account of the changing student profile, the cultural background of the students and the needs of the students from the remote and rural areas, and make modifications in the training methods in the face of these factors.*

Keywords: Education, Nursing, Theory

1. Introduction

The theory is an abstract structure encompassing consistent propositions that try to explain a wide area of interest.¹ Theory brings a perspective to data or arranges it in a way that would make sense based on a set of assumptions, hypotheses, principles, generalizations and rules.^{2,3}

The development of theories in nursing has been the result of dissatisfaction and reactions to the isolation of research findings. The theories revealed deal with the interaction skills within the health system as well as the problem solving and decision-making process. Recent advances in nursing today resulted in the widespread use of nursing schools at the university level, increased interest and support for nursing research, and re-examination of nursing education and practices.⁴

Nurses necessitate the development and application of a theoretical perspective for understanding the relationship between findings and data, predicting them beforehand, judging what data is possibly more important and determining which interventions are required while serving under special circumstances.⁵ For instance, it is of great importance that a nurse working in a psychiatric ward has an established theoretical background on childhood development principles, risk factors associated with disease, disease signs and symptoms. Diagnosing a child with respect to its age and development period, a nurse should be able to separate a hallucination case from a dreaming case when the borderlines between two states are hardly distinguishable. In such a scenario, the nurse should be able to evaluate the needs of the child, determine what information should be collected in order to overcome such complex problems, analyze and implement the information accordingly.

In spite of all these, it is seen that the relationship between nursing research and theory is not well understood and that discussions about whether the theories borrowed from other disciplines prevent the development of nursing discipline remain. Nursing takes advantage of other disciplines in order to meet the physiological, psychological, sociocultural, developmental and spiritual needs of the individual.⁶ In this respect, many theories exclusive of nursing have been the source of information in nursing practice for many years. The system, basic human needs, developmental periods and

psychosocial theories have been used predominantly in the development of nursing models and theories.^{5,7,8} Researches conducted for the development of nursing science use predominantly both nursing theories and theories bestowed from other disciplines in order to achieve scientific progress. Aftermath of the study conducted by İz and Özsoy (2009) which aimed at determining the moral judgment skills of nursing students pursuant to Kohlberg's Cognitive Moral Theory, revealed that family, society, and education played an important role in the moral development of the individual, and therefore effective institutional arrangements should be made at all levels.⁹

Nursing researches contribute to occupational autonomy with the selection, updating and testing of qualified information. Progressive knowledge build-up in nursing strengthens nursing and distinguishes it from other disciplines. Establishing the link between research and theory and practice plays a decisive role in the development of a discipline. It is crucial to conduct scientific research in nursing and use the results obtained from these studies. As per the cited research examples given above, any theory should be used to contribute to the development of nursing profession added the fact that for those theories to be implemented in the field of education and research in universities, nursing educators/academicians are not required to attain any special certification or suffice any precondition specifically. Indeed, this is well documented within the framework of Turkey Higher Education Qualifications.¹⁰ Any nurse with a post doctorate degree can work with theories, develop and enrich the current and advanced knowledge with novel thought and/or research at the level of expertise based on the pertinent graduate qualifications and finally reach original definitions that will bring innovation to the field. For that, one must also understand the interdisciplinary interaction of the field, reach original conclusions using knowledge requiring expertise in analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating new and complex ideas. The graduate students from the doctoral programs in which theory and philosophy are heavily subject of the teachings are expected to evaluate the interpretations related to those theories with their analytical and synthesis skills and conduct research accordingly.

As theories and models evolve, their reflections on education programs have become inevitable.¹¹ In the past,

theory has been regarded as a guide to formulate the conceptual framework in the planning and development of curriculum. Nowadays, it has become an integral part of practice, research, management and education in nursing.⁴In general, concepts, models and theoretical principles in nursing education are used to determine program content, organization, structure, teaching processes and strategies. Theories and models propose methods and approaches that assist in the development and improvement of student knowledge in the field of nursing education, effect the theoretical framework related to nursing education and materials rendered in tandem with the methods encompassing the evaluation of model nursing education/teaching and help nursing students in defining their professional philosophies and values.⁶

Comprehensive literature review revealed the fact that in many articles, theories were widely used to determine the conceptual framework of nursing programs. Literally, many universities have refrained from using a single nursing theory or model and rather preferred an eclectic approach by conjoining many concepts and theories.⁶

It is extremely important that nurse educators regularly update content, concepts, principles and theories taught in nursing programs. Nowadays, tendencies towards updating nursing curriculum have increased especially in the areas of spiritual care,¹² quality and safety,^{13,14} genetics/genomics,^{15,16} gerontology,^{17,18} and end of life care/palliative care.^{19,20}

Broadly, it is emphasized that nursing education is an educational process that involves theoretical and applied teaching/learning experiences. In this education process, after delivery of the necessary professional theoretical information, the nursing student is expected to transform this information into behavior, keep constant self-development efforts, exert for effective self-expression skills, and establish effective and sustainable communication with healthy/sick patients, family members, and society and with colleagues and members of other disciplines.^{21,22}In order for the students to acquire the required qualifications in the education process, the educator has important duties and responsibilities. The main responsibility of nursing educators is to integrate science and art aspects of nursing and transfer these unified skills to the students.²³Considering the facts that the nurse educators support students' academic and professional development and lead as role models in shaping students with wide range of characteristics, therein communication with educators is vital for students to develop these features.²⁴

Considering the importance of communication in the realization of the learning process, the theory of transactional analysis also appraised as an effective tool in nursing education.²⁵Gaining the basic components of transactional analysis theory to educators and students not only will enrich students' in-school learning experiences but also will promote development and use of effective communication methods with healthy/sick individual, family and community and help prevent and solve communication problems.²⁶

Being one of the respected communication theories, Theory of Transactional Analysis is an approach that tries to explain relationships and communications that vary from person to person, extract discreet differences between individuals and scrutinize variations in behavioral attitudes towards others in the event of communication.^{27,28}In this context, the following benefits will be received via evaluation of communication processes in the education system within the framework of Transactional Analysis; finding the predominant ego state used in communications between educator and student in education and between healthy and sick person in patient care, finding what type of transitions (parallel, cross, hidden) have accrued or shall be accrued in order to establish a sound communication between educator and student in education and between healthy and sick person in patient care, finding what type of contact messages (conditional positive, conditional negative, unconditional positive, unconditional negative) are used in communication between educator and student in education and between healthy and sick person in patient care, identifying life positions with which individuals communicate, identifying types of psychological games used in communication between educator and student in education and between a healthy and sick person in patient care in order to shed light on the prevention of certain or possible communication conflicts.²⁵

As a result, academic nurses should take account of the changing student profile, the cultural background of the students and the needs of the students from the remote and rural areas, and make modifications in the training methods in the face of these factors. It necessitates development of new learning strategies based on sound educational theories and research. In the 21st century, nurse educators should be encouraged in blending traditional lesson techniques with learning techniques based on sound theoretical principles such as dialectic learning, problem based learning strategies, operational teaching strategies, logistics teaching strategies, internet and interactive video conferencing, virtual reality simulations, et cetera. It is imperative that nurse educators know how to use the principles of theory in education, determine the theoretical framework of their programs, be aware of how the framework will shape the program, and seek strategies and techniques to develop students' knowledge base, clinical thinking skill and problem solving ability.

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