



History of Nursing in Nursing Curricula

- position paper -

For about 20 years, education for nurses in Germany is increasingly available at universities. Together with the development of nursing studies academic structures have been created as well. However, we notice that no professorships for the history of nursing have been established so far. Results of historical nursing research are mainly published in conference books and in academic history journals, but seldom in German academic nursing journals. The few publications of the last ten years in those journals were mainly written by academic staff and lecturers, but not by professors of nursing. The lack of history of nursing at universities has consequences for the supervision of students who might hesitate to choose history topics for theses and dissertations if appropriate supervision is not provided.

Traditionally, the history of nursing was a topic in German basic nursing education but recent changes in curricula of courses by introducing modules might threaten this content. An analysis of the state regulations for basic nursing education revealed that not all *Länder* (states) of Germany include the history of nursing as a subject (Hackmann 2011). While in principle we appreciate the emphasis on clinical nursing, we are convinced that studies in the humanities are important for nursing education, too.

Ten years ago US colleagues already addressed the problem of deficiencies concerning the history of nursing in curricula (AAHN 2001). This lack is confirmed by other authors (Mc Alister et al. 2010, Padilha & Nelson 2009, Potter 2010, Wolff 2002). Therefore the focus on the history of nursing is already strengthened at an international level (Nelson 2010).

The history of nursing is important because

- the present can only be understood with a profound knowledge of the past,
- a critical professional identity can only be developed with the understanding of the past,
- changes in given situations are only possible with the understanding of the past,
- learning is only possible by reflecting on the past,
- personal development is promoted by learning from the past,
- critical thinking is then promoted.

(Pandel 2005, Sauer 2008)

It is important for the nursing profession to reflect on current debates with the background of historical development. For example, palliative care (Nolte 2010) or health promotion and

prevention (Hackmann 2001) have a long history, revealing ethical dimensions of current debates and decision making.

Therefore, the history of nursing and especially the history of nursing as a profession have to be included in all nursing curricula. This has to be taken into account in the planning of curricula as well as in the planning of lessons. Lessons on the history of nursing may be delivered as a separate unit or be integrated into other subjects. This applies for all nursing curricula including the education of assistant nurses.

Nursing studies at an academic level have to integrate knowledge on historical nursing research (Hülksen-Giesler et al. 2010). It has to be considered to include practical training in historical methods in courses at Master level. Historical topics have to be encouraged for dissertations and theses because we think it is essential to encourage young academics. Lecturers at traditional nursing schools have to be enabled to reflect on the history of nursing and to integrate this into their teaching. The institutions have to provide for the necessary resources (training, literature).

The members of the Section Historical Nursing Research

Literature

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