

# Integrating the values of nursing into educational policies

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*Abstract*— Nurses are a vital resource of health care systems, a resource that needs to be harnessed, while keeping in mind the new challenges that threaten the sustainability of national health systems whose issues need to be adequately addressed by local governments. Improving the quality of the patient-nurse relationship is necessary for the social repositioning of the profession, for restoring the trust conferred by society, as well as for taking responsibility for the internal obligations deriving from this trust.

For a substantial reform, the fundamental values of the nursing profession must be applied through management strategies and tools systematically implemented throughout the medical service system. As a result, the ability of medical personnel to meet the citizens' need to have quality health services is directly linked first and foremost to the reform of the educational system of professional training, which internalizes a value system centered on professionalism, empathy towards the patient and cooperation with patients and other categories of professionals in the medical system.

This paper represents a study on the ways of integrating the fundamental values of the profession, as the main objective, around which the entire educational process is harmonized. The paradigm shift from a health system focused on economic efficiency to a patient-centered health system will have as a premise the student-centered professional training, by acquiring knowledge, skills and abilities, and, above all, by generating a reflection process on the importance of the professional values system.

**Keywords-Component, nursing, empathy, cooperation, professionalism, educational policies**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1950, the current Post-Secondary Sanitary School "Fundeni" is the most important state educational institution in Romania in the field of training in Nursing and a center for continuous training of teachers in this field.

In its activity, the "Fundeni" Sanitary Postgraduate School designs, substantiates and applies the Ministry's strategy regarding pre-university education, as well as the educational policies adopted by the General Council of Bucharest and the Local Council of sector 2.

The Romanian health-care system has been the subject of a comprehensive reform process in recent years, which has sought to ensure increased quality in the health sector and

patient confidence in the health services they receive. Actions to modernize health-care infrastructure, provision of equipment and devices to meet the current patient's expectations and technological innovation context, have been consistently supported. A number of measures have also been adopted in recent years to financially stimulate the retention of medical staff in the country and thus counteract the negative effects of the migration of professionals from the system.

However, the health-care system in Romania remains a source of dissatisfaction for patients, who today enjoy increased mobility in exercising their right to quality care, which gives them the possibility of confrontation and comparison of the Romanian care system with that in other countries.

The beneficial effect of a good quality professional relationship between medical staff and the patient on the duration, quality and implicitly on the success of the treatment and curing act, is recognized in specialized literature. Specialized studies emphasize the importance of the medical-patient personal relationship, a binome which must be based on a harmonious, empathetic, effective communication, with full respect for the patient's rights to specialized treatment but also information, respect for dignity and care for his emotional needs. Each person has a unique experience of their own pathology/disease, and the most effective treatment method is a patient-centered one - on their motivations, values and needs.

Religious beliefs, level of education, psychological profile and the individual specificity of experiencing the disease are just a few aspects that, treated with professionalism and care (in the sense of empathy, compassion) within the medical staff-patient relationship, can substantially improve and streamline the medical act. This aspect becomes all the more obvious for nurses and midwives who have a longer interaction with the patient (and with the family) during the hospitalization period.

In this context, **a joint, unified, coherent and committed action, aimed at improving the relationship between the patient and the health-care professionals (nurses and midwives), becomes necessary.**

Such an integrated approach supports the fulfillment of

international health care commitments, as well as the national guidelines assumed in the field of health (National Health Strategy 2014-2020, Governance Program), which places the patient at the center of the care system.

According to the World Health Organization, nurses and midwives are a vital resource of health-care systems, which must be valued in the context of new challenges that threaten the sustainability of national health-care systems and whose problems must be adequately dealt with by national governments. Improving the quality of the patient-nurse/midwife relationship is also necessary for the social repositioning of the profession, restoring the trust conferred by society, as well as for assuming the internal obligations deriving from this trust.

This project was prepared with participation, through a comprehensive consultation process of professionals in the field, members of OAMGMAMR, who have agreed to devote time and energy to the effort to identify essential values that must guide the professional activity of nurses and midwives in Romania.

The consultative process included several steps: a nationwide quantitative research on professional values was conducted (questionnaire-based survey to identify the main guidelines and options related to the values of the profession, the degrees of development of emotional intelligence, among national health-care providers and nurses and midwives, carried out on a representative sample of 804 nurses and midwives); a nationwide qualitative research was conducted, carried out using 8 focus groups organized in all the country's development regions, attended by a total of 200 nurses and midwives; based on these results obtained from the two researches, a research report called "Diagnosis of options on professional values of nurses and midwives and specifying the intervention needs through public policies and training", was prepared.

Three training (and implicitly consultation) sessions of 45 people from among OAMGMAMR representatives from all development regions, on public policies, were also organized. Experts from within the organization were identified; they worked as a team to develop a summary material reflecting the opinions expressed by their colleagues during the consultative process.

Thus, more than 1000 members of the organization were directly involved in this consultative process, representing all branches of OAMGMAMR and all types of fields of activity of nurses and midwives in Romania.

The aim of the project was to consult institutional stakeholders on the public policy document. It was also published on the official online page of O.A.M.G.M.A.M.R. ([www.oamr.ro](http://www.oamr.ro)) for consultation by those interested, in accordance with the provisions of the legislation on ensuring decision-making transparency.

As part of the consultation process carried out at national level, the following were identified as essential values for the professions of nurse and midwife in Romania: **professionalism, cooperation and empathy.**

The three identified essential values are defined as follows:

**1. Professionalism** means the possession and exercise of the knowledge and competences necessary to carry out a high-quality care act, respecting the principles of professional ethics and deontology.

**Professionalism** is the essential value in the exercise of the professions of nurse and midwife. The care act provided by the practitioners of the two professions cannot achieve its core purpose – to bring a major contribution to the health of patients – unless it is based on sound professional knowledge acquired during the entirety of their professional life.

The patient care process must be based on professional standards, responsibility, a high level of qualification, on a constant concern for updating professional knowledge, respecting ethical principles, for the autonomous exercise of their own profession, for analytical and critical thinking, for patient education. Professional knowledge, strengthened through the professional experience gained over time, increases the value of the care act by performing it in a way that will give the patient as many benefits as possible. Professionalism is the one that gives the patient trust and safety in the staff who cares for him.

**Professionalism** also requires that nurses and midwives be able to provide quality care tailored to the health needs of the members of society, regardless of age, social position, gender, political, religious or sexual orientation, disability or other differentiation criteria. Only in this way can they contribute to increasing the health of the population, to promoting and adopting a healthy lifestyle.

The identified professional behaviors, through which professionalism can be put into practice, consist of:

- gaining a thorough theoretical and practical knowledge and applying it promptly and correctly in the care act for each patient;
- being continuously concerned with professional development;
- carefully assessing the care needs of each patient and making appropriate decisions on meeting them;
- accurately estimating the risks and benefits of the care act;
- using the results of progress and research in the field of health care;
- taking responsibility for the assistance provided to each patient;
- performing the professional act with honesty, integrity and incorruptibility;

- respecting the human rights and dignity of each patient, regardless of age, social category, gender, political, religious or sexual orientation, degree of disability or other differentiation criteria;
- exercising every care act with care for the resources at their disposal, so as not to jeopardize the chances of future generations to receive quality medical care.

**Cooperation** involves establishing relationships with all persons involved – members of the medical team, patients, their families – based on real and open communication, so that the care act includes the perspectives of all those involved.

**Cooperation** enables the exchange of information, knowledge and mutual support, leading to the development of the nurse/midwife-patient-family relationship, with beneficial results in providing medical care, which can thus become customized, complete and continuous. In this cooperation relationship, feedback from patients and their families is very important, as it can contribute to the improvement of the professional act.

**Cooperation** also involves improving work in the medical team, increasing the level of cohesion within it, which can be reflected in the quality of care provided, in the way they are perceived by patients and their families. Thus, it is cooperation that can contribute to increasing the sense of belonging to a respected and respectable professional community and confidence in their own professional skills.

The identified **professional behaviors**, through which cooperation can be put into practice, consist of:

- actively listening and understanding the patient's and/or the family members' perspective;
- conveying to the patient and/or his family members all information regarding the care act, in a clear and understandable manner;
- requesting support from the patient and/or his family members by explaining the importance of their involvement in the care act;
- requesting feedback from the patient and/or his family members and considering it in order to correct any less effective professional behaviors;
- developing mutual respect and support relationships with other colleagues, nurses/midwives, by encouraging the exchange of information and experience;
- encouraging and engaging in the formation of cohesive medical teams based on mutual professional respect and recognition of the importance of the work of each of the members, without canceling the principle of professional autonomy.

**Empathy** in the medical act is the ability to understand, feel and share the other's feelings (patient, family member). It refers to the cognitive, emotional and behavioral ability to put

yourself in the patient's (or the relatives') situation, understand problems and states from their perspective, and communicate this with them appropriately.

**Empathy** is an essential professional value in the profession of nurse/midwife, defined implicitly and explicitly by **care** for the patient. Taking care of the other involves a number of social patterns of verbal and nonverbal understanding and behavior, which arise through complex socializations processes, processes closely related to factors such as culture, gender, education, power, etc.

**Empathy** is the ability to identify the views of others (patients, family members, members of the medical team) and to accept their "truth", even if it does not coincide with your own, the ability not to judge others, to accept them unconditionally and the ability to properly identify the emotions of others and reflect them in the relationships established with them.

**Empathy** includes elements of compassion and sympathy and means recognizing and validating fears, anxieties, pain, concerns of the patient and/or their family members, being a way of engaging pro-actively in the medical act.

**Empathy** simultaneously means connection and understanding, thus being a key process for improving the patient's/family's experience, but also of the medical act itself.

The identified **professional behaviors** through which empathy can be put into practice are:

- showing compassion and understanding towards patients and their families;
- responding appropriately to the patient's reactions and emotional states and to those of his family;
- demonstrating respect for patients and their families;
- demonstrating self-control, reacting calmly in relation to patients and their families;
- providing effective and personalized emotional support to patients and relatives;
- not judging, having the ability to overcome your own stereotypes and prejudices towards

others (patients and relatives of a different age, nationality, level of education, ethnicity, religion, etc.).

#### **Integrating values into professional practice**

For a substantive reform, the fundamental values for the nurse and midwife professions in Romania identified through participation must be translated into practice through systematically implemented management strategies and tools throughout the medical services system. Essential values can also be translated at the level of specific educational programmes for the training and professional evaluation of

nurses and midwives, as well as in specific programmes dedicated to internalizing the values.

- One of the initiated and implemented measures in order to achieve the proposed objective was the inclusion of these fundamental values in the Ethics and deontology Module of the general nurse, midwife and nurse in Romania
- Developing value awareness programs that share and express the importance of the professional values system and determine a reflection process assumed by nurses and midwives;

The curriculum establishes the foundation of what students are expected to know, do and understand through their educational experiences. The concept of curriculum is a complete, comprehensive, condensed, essentialized and dynamic approach, undertaking an action, approaching a field, etc. A curriculum in education must first of all be relevant in itself, contain and promote what is essential, useful, timely, beneficial and feasible.

The main improvement in building the training format was the more accurate definition of the Professional Training Standard. This is the document that describe the results that a participant in a training program carried out in vocational and technical education, has to hold at the end of it.

The Professional Training Standard is the regulator “core” around which the curriculum is designed, and then forms the basis of the assessment for certification purposes.

Therefore, the school permanently pursues the following objectives:

- Training of practical skills necessary for employment through practical training for potential employers
- Development of career perspectives by providing guidance and counselling services in support of the transition from school to active life
- Improving the quality and effectiveness of internships through the training of nominee tutors through practical conventions and the development of support materials (practice books, assessment and monitoring questionnaires for practical internships and a good practice manual).
- Developing partnerships with potential employers.

All these goals have been generated through the development of the nursing process, which has gained new dimensions: the role of the nurse has become more complex, one of the tasks being to diagnose and determine the proper therapeutic attitude. The individual is appreciated holistically as a person with physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual, social and spiritual needs. All these needs are interdependent, equally important and represent the basis of the nurse's interventions according to the nursing diagnosis.

Taking into account these prerequisites, curriculum development involves thinking and structuring the actual learning situations in which students will be involved, acting as

requiring prefiguration of the learning experiences that they will undertake.

Curriculum is also, very important for us as teachers because, is the guide for our lessons, and also helps us to keep all the information organized. Moreover, a curriculum offers teachers the ideas and strategies for assessing student progress. Without the guidance of a curriculum, teachers cannot be certain that they have supplied the necessary knowledge or the opportunity for student success at the next level. Also, a curriculum gives students an understanding of what must be accomplished in order to obtain a degree. Curriculum design is essential for any teacher that wants to perform his job properly and effectively.

So, curriculum design for training nurses is a very important part of creating a contextually relevant and responsive teaching and learning environment for both lecturers and students. The curriculum contains the knowledge, skills and competencies that students need to master in order to move to the next level in their studies, and academic lecturers and tutors who are tasked with teaching this curriculum should, therefore, ensure that the curriculum is up to date, relevant, interesting and stimulating for students.

Professional competencies or competency units, generically called "Competencies", which underlie the design of the Professional Training Standard (PTS) in the general nurse's profession, are included in the PTS content by correlating with learning outcomes units to highlight the link between learning outcomes and skills required at work. A learning outcomes unit is a component of a PTS that describes a professional qualification corresponding to a complex of competencies and consists of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that can be evaluated. In order to establish the units of learning outcomes, one or more occupational standards are analyzed and sectoral committees, professional associations, profile organizations and other regulatory bodies are consulted.

For each unit of learning outcomes, we specify:

- ✓ the title
- ✓ learning outcomes, described in terms of knowledge, abilities and attitudes
- ✓ minimal list of material resources (equipment's, tools, models, raw materials, professional materials, technical, economic, legal, procedures and protocols etc.) required to achieve learning outcomes
- ✓ the evaluation standard corresponding to the unit of learning outcomes

The units of learning outcomes from PTS are:

a) *units of results of general technical education*, common to all qualifications in a field of vocational training (in the case of training nurses, the field is Health and Pedagogical Assistance)

b) *units of results of specialized technical education* associated with the qualification.

Learning outcomes are expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired during various learning situations, represent what the student understands, knows and is able to do on completion of a learning process.

Since learning outcomes reflect the skills acquired by the learner, they must explicitly refer to the selection, combination and appropriate use of knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes, as well as for professional or personal development in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

For each unit of learning outcomes, it is mandatory to draw up the minimum list of material resources that can be found in the school or the economic operators that carry out activities specific to the occupations covered by the qualification and where the pupils carry out the practical training.

Evaluation of learning outcomes aims to recognize and certify learning outcomes, specific to a qualification, demonstrated by the student. Assessment certification is conducted at the end of an education and training program to determine whether the student is able to perform the activity specific to each unit of learning outcomes at the qualification level established by the PTS, comparing the evidence of the learning outcomes produced by candidate with standardized quality standards.

Table number 1 briefly presents the content of the module "Professional ethics and multiculturalism" within the generalist nurse training program starting with 2018, through which the essential values identified following the study were implemented.

Table Number 1 - units of learning outcomes of the module "Professional ethics and multiculturalism"

KNOWLEDGE	ABILITIES	ATTITUDES
- Defining medical ethics and deontology - Presenting the values and principles of medical ethics and deontology in nursing and relations with other sciences	- Argumentative formulation of specific definitions of medical ethics and deontology - The analysis and interpretation of values and principles of medical ethics and deontology	-The awareness and acceptance of professional, ethical and deontological standards specific to the medical field
- Classifying and description of values and principles of bioethics -Identifying	- Recognition, analysis, interpreting and evaluation of the values and principles of bioethics - Recognition	- Acknowledging and assuming principles of bioethics and the capacity to reflect critical reflection upon the challenges of the contemporary

the main challenges of the bioethics field - Identifying, analysing and characterizing the concept of ethical dilemma	and analysis of bioethical challenges -Analysing and interpreting the ethical consequences of scientific research - Approaching the concept of ethical dilemma by analysing the factors that configure the dilemma contexts in medical practice and scientific research	world - The ability to solve bioethical problems through holistic approach of the human being within the field of medical and scientific research and by finding effective means to overcome them  -Acknowledge of appropriate attitudes and behaviours in dilemma-solving strategies development-friendly ethics  universal values and principles of respect for the human being
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The ability of medical staff to meet the needs of citizens to have quality health services is directly linked to the reform of the vocational training system, which internalizes a system of values centered on *professionalism, empathy towards the patient and cooperation with patients and other categories of professionals in the medical system.*

Taking into account the European health strategies and the health of the population in our country, in the health education process, nurses must not only be prepared to meet the needs of the individual, family, community, but also to have confidence in their own intellectual and clinical skills, so that they can work responsibly and autonomously, while meeting increasingly complex health needs. The educational results must allow the student, the future nurse, to select the information to make possible the appreciation, planning, implementation and evaluation of the nursing care.

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