



Review

An integrative review of the literature on the teaching of the history of nursing in pre-registration adult nursing education in the UK



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Accepted 22 October 2014

Keywords:

Integrative
Review
Adult nursing
Pre-registration
Teaching
History
Education

SUMMARY

Aims: To present an integrative review of literature on the teaching of nursing history in pre-registration adult nursing education.

Background: Despite successive reconfigurations in healthcare systems and education policy, the teaching of the history of nursing remains contested in pre-registration curricula. Recent curriculum reviews acknowledge the need for systematic study of nursing education. To date in the UK, there has been no systematic review of the literature on the teaching of nursing history in pre-registration training programmes.

Design: An integrative review of the literature.

Data sources: A search of the electronic databases of CINAHL (1982–2013), HMIC (1979–2013), BNI (1994–2013) and MEDLINE (Pub Med) (1966–2013) was concluded in January 2014, using the keywords ‘adult nursing’, ‘history’, ‘pre-registration’, ‘education’ and ‘teaching’.

Review methods: An integrative literature review was conducted. Identified titles and abstracts were screened separately by researchers for relevance and eligibility and papers were independently assessed for inclusion. Data were abstracted from included papers and quality evaluation of included papers was conducted. The papers were analysed and reported in a narrative synthesis.

Results: Twelve papers were selected for review. The majority of articles were discursive papers and there was a paucity of empirical reports. Content indicated concerns for teaching nursing history in regard to curriculum policy and methods of teaching and assessment.

Conclusions: Substantial support exists for mandatory inclusion of the teaching of historical literacy in nursing centred on the themes of health and disease, hegemony, nursing work and image and ideology. Due to space and teaching expertise issues this could ideally be achieved through the use of nursing museum visits, the usefulness of which could be critically explored in future research.

Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Introduction

The study of history provides ‘a distinct education by providing a sense of the past, alertness to the development of changing values, systems and societies and the instilling of critical yet tolerant personal attitudes’ (History Benchmarking Report, 1999, p. 22). In the midst of successive educational reforms in pre-registration nursing education in the UK and curriculum reviews, many prompted by media criticisms, nursing history as a curricular topic in pre-registration nursing programmes in the UK seems to have receded into obscurity. This paper presents an integrative review of the literature on the teaching

of adult nursing history. The focus is on history teaching and curriculum policy and methods of teaching and assessment.

Background

When the Nurses’ Registration Act (1919) ushered in the General Nursing Council for England and Wales (GNC) and the existence of the mandatory Syllabus of Training from 1923 until 1979, it required nurses to gain understanding of the historical foundations of nursing. The Syllabus of subjects for examination specified that the subject be approached as an outline of the history of nursing to provide context for the present day (Ferguson, 1979a,b). Often taught by the most able professional, the teaching of nursing history was held in high regard up until the Second World War (Kerr, 1994). After the war, while nursing history remained mandatory, this did not mean that it was taught in all curricula and, when taught as a topic, was often narrowed to a cursory history of the training hospital and reference to Miss Nightingale and the Crimean War (Fealy, 2006). And while large teaching schools

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tended not to confuse nursing history with nostalgia but still tended only to focus on their own nurses' central role in nursing history, in smaller provincial schools tendency to reminisce about the 'good old days' seemed strong. Successive official reports on nursing paved the way for student and supernumerary status (Ministry of Health Board of Education, 1939; Ministry of Health/Department of Health for Scotland and Ministry of Labour and National Service, 1947; Royal College of Nursing, 1964). This departure from apprenticeship training and the subordinate and practice centric image of nursing (Briggs 1972, Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act and Bill, 1979), came about in the transfer of nursing education to higher education institutions, where a 3-year diploma responded to poor professional esteem and criticisms of medical-centric teaching with an eclectic curriculum (UKCC 1986; Royal College of Nursing, 1985). Reasoning this would produce a well-formed nurse who could provide clinical leadership, a WHO nursing conference in Europe in 1988, supported this reform. With this change the biological, physical and behavioural disciplines quickly asserted their position in nursing curricula grappling to respond to rapid knowledge development in health science (Dellasega et al., 2007). While moving from block curricula to an integrated curriculum approach focusing on concepts and principles made it hard to establish where essentials of the curriculum were being taught without exhaustive analysis of the curriculum content (Dellasega et al., 2007), there was now a sense that the humanities, particularly nursing history, if not eliminated, had been marginalized (Davis, 1995).

The Review

Aim

The aim was to conduct an integrative review of literature on the teaching of nursing history in the pre-registration nursing curriculum.

Design

An integrative review of the literature pertaining to the teaching of nursing history was conducted consistent with the process proffered by Cooper (1989) and Whitmore and Knafl (2005). Published reports, including empirical studies and discussion papers, were searched for and collected systematically and findings were evaluated and analysed. Interpretation and presentation of results were achieved through the use of a narrative synthesis. Whitmore and Knafl (2005) have reasoned that weaknesses are inevitable in reviews of single methods and the integrative review method permits inclusion and synthesis of diverse methodologies to arrive at comprehensive understanding of phenomena. These new understandings help to establish the next step for research and practice.

Search Methods

Using a number of strategies, a literature search was conducted initially in September 2012 and updated in January 2014 (Fig. 1). Firstly, a search of the electronic databases of CINAHL (1982–2013), HMC (1979–2013), BNI (1994–2013) and MEDLINE (PubMed) (1966–2013) was conducted using the keywords 'nursing', 'history', 'pre-registration', 'education' and 'teaching'. As the interest in medical humanities developed in the 1970s, there were no date limits imposed on the electronic searches other than existing limits. This search was supplemented by a search of journals held in the first researcher's affiliated university libraries. Further to this, examination of reference lists in published papers as well as networking with nursing historians for further leads on relevant publications in the field was conducted. The journals hand searched included the following; *Nursing History Review*, *International History of Nursing Journal*, *Nurse Education Today*, *Journal of Nursing Education*, *Nurse Educator* and *Nurse Education in Practice*. All articles meeting the inclusion criteria were included in the review.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Before starting the search we agreed on the inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 1). Only English language published papers concerned with the teaching and assessment of nursing history were included. Nursing history was defined as a disciplinary sub-topic in academe, similar to 'medical history' or 'labour history' and therefore a curriculum topic as distinct from history of nursing which is considered a broad term referring to the past of nursing, including histories of nursing (Fealy, 2008). We included only quality papers referring to the teaching of nursing and excluded papers focusing on teaching of history in other curricula. We included empirical studies, discussion papers, abstracts, and conference proceedings and excluded editorials, brief communications and position statements and papers relating to the teaching of nursing history. We also excluded papers focusing on more general issues of nursing curriculum policy and practice. The first author conducted the searches and the second verified the searches and ensured all included articles meeting the inclusion criteria.

Search Outcome

The initial searches yielded a total of 198,000 titles. Once the inclusion criteria were applied and duplicate publications eliminated, 59 titles were retained. A survey of the retrieved papers' reference lists yielded one new item and no further new items were obtained from journal hand searches. Of these titles, we judged six irrelevant and were duly discarded. One addressed teaching nursing theory; two teaching medical history and a further three focused on more general issues in nursing education. We reviewed the remaining 53 abstracts for eligibility against the inclusion and exclusion criteria and found that 22 articles were ineligible. Of the excluded items, four were not in English; several others constituted personal perspective papers, brief communications and conference proceedings on teaching nursing history. Three position papers on teaching nursing history were also excluded (American Association for the History of Nursing, 2001; Canadian Nurses Association, 2004; German Society of Nursing Science, 2012), as well as three editorials on the value of nursing history in nurse education (Kalisch, 1976; Donohue, 1991; Lynaugh, 1996). Four discussion papers on, respectively, nursing's need for scholars of history, nurses' tendency to disassociate from its past and history for nursing practice were also eliminated (Kerr, 1994; Nelson, 2002, 2004; D'Antonio, 2006). We then reviewed 30 papers.

Quality Appraisal

We evaluated the theoretical papers using theory analysis and critique and empirical papers according to the authenticity, methodological quality, informational value, and representativeness of the available primary sources (Kirkevold, 1997). Following this process (Fig. 1) we entered a total of twelve papers into the final review not on the basis of even geographical representation of the origin of the studies but on the basis of the substantive content focused on the subject of teaching history of nursing in pre-registration nursing education. These comprised discursive papers and empirical studies.

Data Extraction

The twelve items were prepared on an MS EXCEL spread sheet. Information compiled included details on author, year and country of origin and in which the research was published together with paper title and rationale for inclusion and exclusion.

Synthesis

We reduced the data, firstly by categorising the included published papers according to the method employed. We collated the articles

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