



Original article

Development and evaluation of a new curriculum based on the Delphi method for master of nursing programs in China[☆]Xiao-Ping Jiang^{a,*}, Li Yan^b, Xian-Lan Zheng^a, Xian Liu^a, Xiao-Qiong Wei^a^a Department of Nursing, Children's Hospital of Chongqing Medical University, Chongqing 400014, China^b Department of Intensive Care Unit, Children's Hospital of Chongqing Medical University, Chongqing 400014, China

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To develop a new curriculum for a master's degree in nursing and provide a reference for nursing education in China.**Methods:** After a comprehensive literature review and item consolidation, an expert panel developed the initial version of the master's degree program objective and curriculum. A three-round Delphi study was subsequently conducted to revise and validate the curriculum.**Results:** Twenty-six experts participated in the evaluation and validation process. The authority coefficient was 0.88, and the Kendall coordination coefficient was statistically significant (χ^2 test, $P < 0.01$). The final training objective contained 9 items, covering knowledge, skills and humanistic quality. The final established curriculum contained 22 courses, including 5 public compulsory courses, 5 specialized basic compulsory courses and 12 elective courses for professional development.**Conclusions:** The present study provided an operational curriculum for a master's degree in nursing in China.© 2016 Shanxi Medical Periodical Press. Publishing services by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Nursing education in China is an evolving process and is occurring alongside the reform and development of China's social and healthcare system. Historically, nursing education in China has been maintained at the bachelor's degree level. The first master of nursing program in China, established 20 years ago, has trained a large number of nursing educators and clinical nursing experts, greatly promoting the development of nursing as a profession in China. However, nursing was not considered a major healthcare discipline. Before 2011 nursing was treated as a sub-discipline of medicine in China. Nursing was upgraded to a first-level discipline in 2011, resulting in a rapid growth in nursing graduate education in China.^{1,2} However, compared with similar programs in developed countries, China's nursing graduate education remains at a relatively low level.^{3–9} There has been intense debate about the

master's degree program's objective and curriculum over the past few years. Some courses in the curriculum have been directly adopted from clinical medicine courses. Thus, the curriculum lacks nursing-specific courses, which often do not match the objectives. A single academic degree system was in place for 20 years before the specialized degree was added in 2010.⁴ By 2011, the number of colleges with nursing-specialized degree programs had increased to include dozens.⁶ Although all colleges have made great efforts to train senior specialized nurses who reflect the nursing character and meet social needs, their program objectives and teaching methods differ greatly. This is a serious problem in managing nursing education in China.

In the present study, considering the social demands and requirements for nursing discipline development, we developed and evaluated a new curriculum for a nursing-specialized degree aimed at training senior nursing practitioners with different clinical roles, such as clinical nursing specialists, nursing teachers, and nursing managers, using the Delphi experts' inquiry method. We believe the newly developed program can meet the needs of rapidly increasing advanced nursing education in China and may be helpful in developing similar programs in other developing countries.

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2. Methods

2.1. Setting

The Delphi technique is a type of survey tool used for structuring group opinion and discussion.¹⁰ The method is used to initiate discussion on a specified topic and collect opinions among a given group, so that a decision is made on the basis of demands and views at a group level.¹⁰ The Delphi technique is characterized by anonymity, questionnaires with controlled feedback, and statistical analysis of the group's responses.¹¹ In the present study, the data were collected through repeated surveys and the results of preceding rounds were fed back by the researcher in the form of statistical summaries, until a consensus was reached among panel members.^{12,13}

2.1.1. Establishment of the research team

The research team members were organized in the Children's Hospital and the School of Nursing of Chongqing Medical University. Members included two clinical nursing management experts, three nursing education experts, four instructors of clinical nursing education and two graduate students. Through regular meetings, the research team made decisions collectively on all the key aspects of the research, such as the drafting of the Delphi expert questionnaire and the selection of survey items.

2.1.2. Development of expert questionnaire

2.1.2.1. Literature review. We used a stratified random sampling strategy and selected 25 out of 75 medical colleges that had an accredited master of nursing program from September 2011 to August 2012. This included those from 7 "Project 211" universities in China, such as Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Fudan University, Southeast University, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, South Medical University and Harbin Medical University. There were also 6 foreign universities, including University of Michigan, Johns Hopkins University and University of Cincinnati (United States of America), Flinders University (Australia), and Chiang Mai University and Eastern University (Thailand). The "Project 211" universities include the top 100 universities in China. We surveyed their nursing graduate programs by communications via telephone, Internet, or mail and e-mail. Among this group, 23 had academic degree programs and 7 had specialized degree programs from China, and there were 2 programs from Flinders University and Chiang Mai University. Additionally, for the American programs at Johns Hopkins University, University of Cincinnati and Eastern University, we used information available on their respective websites. We analyzed and extracted major elements of the program objectives and curricula from the data collected.

We also searched databases for relevant literature, using the following terms in combination: "nursing", "professional/specialized degree", "academic degree", "training mode", "training goal" and "curriculum". The databases included CNKI, Wanfang Data, PUBMED, OVID-BIOSIS, EBSCO-MEDLINE, Highwire-Press and Google, and the search included publications from 2005 to 2011. We prepared the expert questionnaire by comparing and synthesizing the constituent elements of the nursing graduate programs in China and other countries.^{13–28}

2.1.2.2. Preparation of the expert questionnaire. After several research team meetings, we developed a complete Delphi expert questionnaire comprising 10 entries for the training objectives and 78 entries for the curriculum, the letter to the experts, filling instructions, indices for each item, and demographic data of experts (gender, age, education, title, work field, work experience, familiarity with the content and judgment ability). The evaluation of all

the entries used Liker's five-level score method,²⁵ and a column for each entry was added to allow the experts to provide their opinions and suggestions.

2.1.3. Selection of the expert panel

The selection criteria of the consulting experts were as follows: masters or doctoral tutors having at least 3 years of experience in nursing graduate education, experts holding senior positions in clinical nursing education and management for more than 15 years, or administrators holding an above mid-level title who had been engaged in graduate education management for more than 3 years. 36 experts from different regions in China, and 4 foreign experts were selected to participate in the survey.

2.1.4. Evaluation procedure and analysis

We carried out the first-round consultation via e-mail, mailing or face-to-face distribution. Some modifications, deletions and additions to the consultation entries were made, based on the results of the first-round consultation and our team discussion. The modified expert questionnaire was then used in the second-round consultation. Experts reached an agreement on training objectives after the second-round consultation. The third-round consultation was needed only for the curriculum, and a consensus for each item was achieved.

2.2. Data analysis

Two team members entered the results from each round of expert consultation independently and the data analysis was done using SPSS19.0 software. We calculated the positive coefficient of experts, the authority coefficient and coordination coefficient, and carried out the Kendall coordination coefficient significance test. Authority coefficients consisted of the arithmetic mean value of familiarity coefficient and coefficient of judgment basis. In the present study, the values of authority coefficients were 1.0, 0.8, 0.5, 0.2, and 0.0, corresponding to very familiar, familiar, generally familiar, unfamiliar and very unfamiliar, respectively. Judgment basis was assigned with theoretical analysis (0.3, 0.2, and 0.1), work experience (0.5, 0.4, and 0.3), domestic and international references (0.1, 0.1, and 0.1) and intuition judgment (0.1, 0.1, and 0.1) sequentially for large, medium, and small levels.

Table 1
Affiliations of consultation experts ($n = 26$).

Consultation experts' workplace	Number
Fudan University	1
Harbin Medical University	1
Anhui Medical University	2
Zhengzhou University	2
Kunming Medical College	1
Guangxi Medical University	2
Chendu College of Traditional Chinese Medicine	1
Sichuan University	2
Chongqing Medical University	5
Shanghai Children's Medical Center	1
Henan Provincial People's Hospital	1
Nursing School of Peking Union Medical College	1
Southwest Jiaotong University	2
Ningxia Medical University	1
Third Military Medical University	1
Nursing School of Hong Kong University of Science and Engineering	1
Flinders University of Australia	1
Total	26

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