

Nursing

[Health & Medicine](#), [Nursing](#)



Can critical thinking in nursing be taught? Can critical thinking in nursing be taught? Introduction The evaluation of the elements of nursing, not just as a profession but also as a science, should be based on certain criteria: the effects of each element on the performance of nurses but also the potentials of nurses to meet the relevant requirements need to be taken into consideration. On the other hand, the characteristics of nursing worldwide can be differentiated, under the influence of local ethics and culture. In this paper a specific element of nursing is explored: critical thinking. The literature published in this field has been reviewed. Two studies were chosen for explaining whether critical thinking in nursing can be taught. Both studies seem to promote the idea that critical thinking could be based on the learning process, but just partially. The personal attitudes of nurses are able to affect their critical thinking. It has been made clear that critical thinking, as all other elements of nursing, can be influenced by the social and economic environment of nurses. In this context, critical thinking has been proved to be a rather complex process, which could be only partially controlled through the learning process.

Summary

Critical thinking is an important element of nursing. In the literature, emphasis is given on critical thinking as a vital skill of nurses. In this context, most studies published in this field promote the idea that critical thinking should be an indispensable part of education in nursing. The specific issue is explored in the two studies analyzed in this paper. In the first of these studies, the study of Raymond-Seniuk & McGrath (2011) emphasis is given on the philosophical perspectives of critical thinking, especially in regard to

nursing (Raymond-Seniuk & McGrath 2011, p. 45). The specific study presents a series of definitions of critical thinking, aiming to show the potential role of critical thinking in nursing. At the same time, a comparative analysis is provided between critical thinking and certain philosophical concepts, such as person, knowledge and truth (Raymond-Seniuk & McGrath 2011, p. 47-48). The above study aims to show the relationship between nursing and critical thinking especially in regard to the following issue: whether critical thinking in nursing can be taught or not. On the other hand, the study of Wang & Liao (2012) presents a critical example of the incorporation of critical thinking in nursing education: reference is made to the communication skills incorporated in the English communication classes of baccalaureate nursing students' (Wang & Liao 2012, p. 3188). The paper shows that such skills can highly affect the performance of nursing students at the particular level of education. It is assumed that similar benefits could be achieved in regard to other educational activities related to nursing. In other words, in the study of Wang & Liao (2012) also, as in that of Raymond-Seniuk & McGrath (2011) the potentials of critical thinking to be part of the learning process are highlighted: in the second of the above studies the theoretical perspectives of this relationship are explained while in the first of the studies the incorporation of critical thinking in nursing education is presented as of its practical implications.

Analysis

The study of Raymond-Seniuk & McGrath (2011) promotes an idea similar with that promoted in the study of Wang & Liao (2012). In both studies emphasis is given on the value of critical thinking as part of nursing

education. Moreover, both studies seem to agree that critical thinking in nursing can be part of the learning process. The key difference between these studies is the approach used for promoting the above idea. Raymond-Seniuk & McGrath (2011) use certain philosophical concepts, such as person and knowledge, in order to prove that critical thinking needs to be part of nursing education. Moreover, Raymond-Seniuk & McGrath (2011) present the different perspectives of critical thinking, especially as related to nursing; these perspectives are reflected in the definitions of critical thinking presented in the above study. At the same time, it is made clear that critical thinking can be learned in the context of nursing education; however, in order for such target to be achieved, a pluralistic approach in explaining critical thinking in education would be necessary. The second of the studies analyzed in this paper, i. e. the study of Wang & Liao (2012) refer to an example of the promotion of critical thinking in nursing education: ‘ the incorporation of critical thinking skills in classes of baccalaureate nursing students’ (Wang & Liao 2012, p. 3188) is presented and explained aiming to show that critical thinking can be taught. A total of 59 students in Taiwan completed a questionnaire for explaining their views on critical thinking and its role in their studies (Wang & Liao 2012, p. 3188). Interviews were also used, as a supplementary research tool (Wang & Liao 2012, p. 3192). The results showed that ‘ the incorporation of critical thinking skills in classes’ (Wang & Liao 2012, p. 3192) helped nursing students to increase their critical thinking potentials. It is also suggested that critical thinking skills become part of classes related to nursing education (Wang & Liao 2012, p. 3195). According to the above, the study of Wang & Liao (2012) also verified

the potentials of critical thinking in nursing education to be taught. Moreover, in opposition with the study of Raymond-Seniuk & McGrath (2011), the study of Wang & Liao (2012) shows the practical aspects of the incorporation of critical thinking in the learning process, as related to nursing education.

Reflection

The two studies reviewed for this paper have helped me to understand the actual role of critical thinking in nursing. Critical thinking is not just a reflection of a person's beliefs or background. It can be a framework that can be incorporated in the learning process. In nursing, the incorporation of critical thinking in nursing can help nurses to become more effective in managing crises. However, in order for critical thinking to play such role it would be necessary to be supported accordingly: the fact that critical thinking can be learned means that critical thinking should be incorporated in the learning process of nursing education. Through the two studies presented above I had the chance to realize that the potentials of nursing students in terms of critical thinking are not standardized but they can gradually be increased, either in the short or the long term.

Conclusion

The relationship between critical thinking and the learning process has been proved to be strong. However, since personal attitudes can affect the potentials of the learning process to intervene in critical thinking, the following assumption would be developed: critical thinking in nursing, as in other fields also, can be taught but the responses of nurses to the learning process related to critical thinking cannot be estimated in advance. This is an

issue that should be taken into consideration when developing a learning scheme for promoting critical thinking in nursing. This scheme should meet certain characteristics so that it can respond to the needs of learners: it should be flexible, able to be continuously updated and accessible to learners with different social and educational background. In other words, critical thinking in nursing can be taught, but only if an appropriate learning scheme is used.

References

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