

A framework for spiritually competent practice in Nursing Education- SOPHIE

(Self- exploration through Ontological, Phenomenological, and Humanistic, Ideological, and Existential expressions)

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Spirituality is ...

While the human spirit may be deeply mysterious, pointing as it does towards aspects of reality that are deep, unfathomable and transcendent, spirituality is a human activity that attempts to express these profound experiences in inner longing in terms that are meaningful for the individual (Swinton, 2001, p.21).

Introduction:

Difficulties persist in conceptualising spiritual needs and understanding their relationship to religious needs and wellbeing in healthcare and particularly in nursing education. This research was undertaken to explore approaches and challenges associated with this area in undergraduate nursing education. This study contributes to understanding how spirituality is approached in undergraduate nurse education. By conducting a literature review from (1993-2017) combined with exploratory multiple case studies at different universities across England, this study investigates the needs and existing challenges faced by nursing students and educators in relating spirituality to nursing education. Also, undergraduate nursing curricula and related documents used in each case are examined to explore how curriculum requirements are delivered and whether they facilitate developing competency in addressing spiritual need.

Issues in Focus

- What is spiritually competent holistic care?
- Are we prepared enough to provide person centred spiritual care?
- How to approach spirituality in nursing education?
- Why it is difficult to relate spiritual care aspects in nursing education?
- What are the factors that influence the integration of spirituality in nursing education?

Literature Review (1993- April 2017)

1. Quantitative Assessment tools on spiritual care competency – 10 papers
2. Approaches used to integrate spirituality in nursing education-10 papers
3. Inclusion of spirituality in nursing texts or curriculum- 5 papers
4. View from nursing educators- 4 papers
5. Perspectives from nursing students- 2 papers

Findings from Literature Review:

- Knowledge and Practice gaps
1. Lack of ontological integration
 2. Lack of phenomenological understanding
 3. Lack of support and environmental constraints
 4. Curriculum structure and unprepared faculty

Research Method- Multiple Exploratory Case Studies (2013-2017)

- Participants
Five Universities across England.
- Data collection
 - Semi-structured Interviews from Nursing Educators (13)
 - Focus group studies on student nurses-(4 studies)
 - Curriculum review- 4 universities
- Data analysis
Template analysis (King and Brooks, 2017)

Findings:

1. Integrating spirituality in undergraduate nursing education calls for more clarity both in classroom teaching and during clinical experience.
2. Lack of clarity and confusion in relating spirituality to nursing education, may result in avoidance or dealing with spiritual care needs as an implicit element of holistic care.
3. An explicit recognition and adequate integration of spirituality is required in undergraduate nursing education to develop a shared understanding among students and nursing educators.
4. 1:1 mentorship, and reflective activities are recommended to overcome the challenge of confidence and engagement associated with the fear and question of authority among students. In this way mentors are able to present and interpret reality for the student.
5. The present healthcare culture focuses on technical nursing education rather than interpersonal and existential aspects of care of nursing education. Hence, spiritual care is largely influenced by care priorities shaped by personal experiences, confidence level, personal interest, time and environmental factors, which limits the holistic aspect of person-centred care.
6. Spiritual care is neglected in nurse education partly owing to confusion between religion and spirituality. An underlying fear of 'getting it wrong' and possibly causing offence to others in a multicultural society also contributes.
7. Anxiety related to personal belief and role confusion with chaplaincy services often results in an inadequate representation of spirituality in nursing education.
8. The existing nursing curriculum with a modular and choice-based approach may lead to an inadequate representation of spirituality in both classroom and practical education. It is important to recognise students and nursing educators' spiritual care needs to authenticate their professional roles.
9. Self-awareness is essential to develop acceptance and compassion for self and others.

Conclusion:

A multidisciplinary teaching approach integrating medical anthropology, humanistic psychology and existential phenomenology should be explored as a basis for an integrated nursing curriculum that could explore spirituality in its widest sense. Constructing knowledge through ontological learning engagements among educators and students is essential to develop role clarity, authenticity and empowerment to understand and address spiritual care needs of a person. The participants voiced a desire for developing a shared understanding through developing a more explicit representation of spirituality in nursing education and the recognition of appropriate educational approaches in this area. Based on the findings of this study a learning framework is proposed; SOPHIE (Self-exploration through Ontological, Phenomenological, Humanistic, Ideological, and Existential expressions), to encourage self-awareness and reflexivity among nursing educators and students. SOPHIE aims to bring ontological authenticity and congruency to the forefront of nursing knowledge and practice.. The reflective Framework SOPHIE is briefly illustrated in the section below. More research is required to analyse the impact of SOPHIE as a teaching and learning tool in nursing education and across health care in general.

SOPHIE- Self- Exploration through Ontological, Phenomenological, and Humanistic, Ideological, and Existential Expressions

SOPHIE: An Expression of Self – Expansion

SOPHIE, represents the quest for an expanded self. It symbolises, a drop in the ocean in search of its own existence. The drop that remains in flux and can never be confined to any given point, yet actualises its existence through infinite waves. Each circle in the diagram represents a wave and its journey of growth and expansion. Hence, unique to personal search and meaning of life. The empty lines in each circle represents personal experiences of being and becoming in- quest of meaning making and developing authenticity as spiritual expressions.

