

# GENERAL EDUCATION IN NURSING: Current practices and faculty attitudes

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Currently in North America, basic education for registered nurses is generally furnished within the higher educational system. However, nursing has a relatively short history in that system. It was not until the 1970s in both Canada and the United States that the majority of nursing programs were provided by colleges and universities instead of hospitals. One of the major reasons for this change was a desire to improve nursing education by providing a good general education background. Nursing history indicates that as recognition of the importance of general education grew, the number of nursing programs in higher education also increased; however, this important relationship has not been well studied. No systematic study of the general education content in baccalaureate and college diploma nursing programs in Canada is available. This is regrettable when one considers that nursing curriculum changes have been epidemic in recent years, and anyone familiar with nursing literature can easily perceive that changes have mainly been concerned with the nursing component of the curriculum but not with general education courses. A sound curriculum change should involve both.

## The Literature on General Education

### *The themes*

Authorities agree that the concept of general education is ambiguous. To make the matter more complex, the term "liberal education", which itself is interpreted in many ways, has been used interchangeably with general education. Conrad (1978) says that it is meaningless to differentiate between these two terms; they have been used interchangeably for too long and by too many people. Nonetheless, it is possible to find general agreement that professional education is basically concerned with the performance of the individual as a worker, while general education is primarily concerned with civic and personal development. The values, purposes and functions of general education differ from those of professional education. In general education the themes of common humanity and of unity are emphasized. In contrast, professional education is limited to the concerns of particular

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people who are engaged in particular professions. Amos (1985) cites several principles adopted by the Association of American Colleges, during a conference held in December, 1983, the purpose of which was to develop a consensus about "Integrating Liberal and Professional Education". They reveal that the Association is also concerned with the concepts of common humanity and unity: "Characteristics in common that mark them as educated people, regardless of the type of undergraduate preparation;" and the "need to emphasize the unity of all learning" (p. 46).

### *The goals*

Three goals of general education that were identified by McGrath in 1959 seem to be found in most lists in the literature on general education: broad knowledge, intellectual skills, and an integrated and self-directed personality. A panel of the Association of American Medical Colleges (1984) concludes that the purpose of a *general professional education* for medical students is acquiring knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Russell (1959) claims that the goals of cultivating intellectual skills and of developing a self-directed and integrated personality should be served by the faculty of both general and professional education departments. Therefore, even though the primary goals of professional and general education are different, they are not contradictory but serve to complement and reinforce each other.

### *The courses*

There has not been genuine agreement on what constitutes a general education course. Pillepich (1962) and Russell (1959) found that confusion existed among nursing faculty members on this subject. There seem to be two main approaches to classifying general education courses. In the first, all non-nursing courses are considered to be general education. In the second, all courses that are neither nursing courses nor nursing support courses are viewed as general education. In this study, the first approach was used because the second approach is confusing. In that classification for example, physiology is general when taken by a music student and professional when taken by a nursing student. However, non-nursing courses taught by nursing departments are considered professional courses in this study.

## **Method**

### *The questionnaire*

The researcher developed a questionnaire that included 49 questions on nursing faculty's opinions on general education and nine questions on personal information about the respondents. A pilot study was done to

(baccalaureate = 15; diploma = 34) of the programs were returned. These included six from baccalaureate directors, 15 from diploma directors, 73 from baccalaureate faculty and 115 from diploma faculty.

### *Procedure*

Material from 54 programs was examined for general education goals and courses. Quantifiable items were tabulated and expressed in total frequencies and in percentages. However, not all of the 54 programs could be tabulated under all items because some of the catalogues and calendars did not contain all the information needed. Thus, the number of nursing programs for which there are responses will differ for different items. In addition, three diploma programs (all in Quebec) are excluded from data that require credits computation because the extensive general education credits provided by these programs (a total of 72 in each) could distort the general picture of diploma nursing programs.

Information obtained from the 209 questionnaire responses was examined in order to identify nursing directors and faculty's attitudes toward general education goals and courses. Quantifiable items were tabulated and expressed in total frequencies and in percentages. Written opinions and comments were individually examined and then categorized and tabulated for frequencies, when applicable.

### **Findings of the Study**

Results are reported in two major sections: general education goals and courses. In each section, baccalaureate and diploma programs are compared, and the attitudes of faculty in both types of program are compared. Opinions of nursing directors and nursing faculty were each studied separately, although no significant differences were found.

#### *General education goals*

The materials provided showed that most nursing program objectives are profession-related, and that conscious efforts to provide general education are extremely rare. Most program descriptions state objectives that are congruent with those of general education, but apparently are intended as goals of professional education. This is the case for each of the goals of general education identified by McGrath (1959): broad knowledge, intellectual skills and an integrated and self-directed personality.

Twenty-two (baccalaureate = 9; diploma = 13) of 29 programs (baccalaureate = 10; diploma = 19) state that the faculty believe that broader knowledge in major disciplines is useful in strengthening nursing practice:

assess the feasibility of the questionnaire. The six respondents indicated that the questionnaire could be completed without much difficulty. However, there were many comments, especially about terminology used in the questionnaire. These comments were reviewed, and most were used as bases for changes to the questionnaire.

### *Terminology in this study*

*General education courses* are non-nursing courses taught by departments other than nursing departments.

*Required general education courses* are courses that are specified by course name and number, and that are required of all nursing students in a program.

*Specially designed courses* are courses that are specifically designed for nursing or health science students.

*Free electives* are courses that may be taken from any discipline.

*Designated electives* are courses that may be taken from specified disciplines.

### *The samples*

The study has two samples a) 54 English language basic nursing programs from which usable program documents were received; and b) 188 nursing faculty and 21 nursing directors of 49 basic nursing programs that responded to the questionnaires.

#### *Sample 1: Nursing programs*

The sample of programs was derived from the responses to a letter, requesting catalogues and school calendars, sent to the directors of all 60 English language basic nursing programs in Canada (baccalaureate = 18; diploma = 42) in February and March of 1983. After a follow-up letter, all but one responded. However, 5 of 59 program directors sent materials that did not contain the necessary information, leaving only 54 programs whose documents could be analyzed.

#### *Sample 2: Nursing faculty and directors*

The sample of faculty and directors was derived from those responding to the request for program materials. In October 1983, a total of 578 questionnaires were sent to the directors of these 59 programs (baccalaureate = 18; diploma = 41). All fifty-nine nursing program directors were asked to fill out one questionnaire themselves and to distribute questionnaires to three faculty members from each year of their program. (Faculty members were defined as full-time faculty who teach in basic nursing programs.) A total of 209 questionnaires from 49



that is, for professional purposes. This belief can be represented by a typical statement: "Apply knowledge from natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities to nursing practice." Seventeen of 18 nursing programs (baccalaureate = 11; diploma = 7) include development of intellectual skills in their objectives. However, these seem to be related to nursing practice only, not to students' personal lives as individuals and citizens. Problem-solving skills (used in the nursing process) and communication skills are the two intellectual skills most commonly referred to. Fourteen (baccalaureate = 9; diploma = 5) of 18 nursing programs have stated goals related to life-long learning. These are expressed in somewhat different phrases, such as "personal and professional development", "continued learning", "self-directed learning" and "increase own competency". However, all emphasize the importance of life-long learning in connection with the nursing profession, not for students' personal lives.

Statements of goals of general education were rare in baccalaureate and diploma programs and no differences were found. Although the researcher did not intend to study nursing components in this study, the objectives of the 18 programs were reviewed in relation to the goals of professional education. The majority of both diploma and baccalaureate nursing programs emphasize problem-solving skills, therapeutic skills (communication and interpersonal skills), professional conduct, and professional competency through continuing education. Both claim to produce graduates who will practise "professional nursing". There is, therefore, no real difference in the objectives for nursing practices; but that is not to say that the nursing content taught to the two types of student is identical. There is one major difference. Baccalaureate programs suggest that their graduates are potential "leaders" in the nursing profession by emphasizing "leadership skills", "skills to apply research to nursing practice" and "active involvement with community issues". These objectives are not stated by any diploma programs. Thus, the uniqueness of the assumed leadership role for baccalaureate graduates seems to be accepted by both nursing programs.

***Faculty attitudes toward general education goals.*** The heavy emphasis on the profession in nursing programs is not consistent with faculty's attitudes toward general education. The majority believe that they are responsible for preparing students both to be nurses and to lead a meaningful life as individuals and as citizens. They view general education courses having professional as well as general education purposes. However, they seem to consider general education courses related to nursing as more important than courses not directly related to nursing.

The inconsistency between current practices and faculty attitudes seems to indicate that nursing faculty beliefs and opinions are poorly reflected in their programs. This finding agrees with those of Russell (1959) and Pillepich

(1962). However, there is another possible explanation for the inconsistency. Although faculty accept responsibilities for both forms of education, it is possible that they consider that the major responsibility for general education lies with departments that offer the courses. Such an attitude is shown in a statement from one diploma program: "The goals of general education for all students are met through common courses in English, humanities and physical education." Thus, faculty members may believe that simply making general education courses available will fulfill their own responsibilities. However, Russell and Pillepich argue that nursing faculty should be involved in general education.

Although no actual difference was found, the percentage of faculty who believe that there is a difference between the two types of program in terms of general education goals is higher among baccalaureate faculty (about 90%) than among diploma faculty (about 70%). The remaining faculty members believe that general education should be one of the common components shared by both programs, although they believe that the two programs are different.

Exactly how baccalaureate and college diploma programs differ has been debated in nursing. This study reveals that an overwhelming majority of faculty members believe that the two programs are partially different. Extremely few (only three) believe that the two programs are completely different and no one believes that there is no difference between the two programs. About half of faculty, regardless of the program, believes that the two are different because they have different as well as common components. The other half believes that the two programs are different because, in addition to all the diploma components, baccalaureate programs contain other components. Although both beliefs are not reflected in stated general education goals in both programs, general education courses provided by nursing programs indicate that the latter belief reflects the reality more accurately. This issue will be discussed further in the next section.

### *General education courses*

Table 1 shows the average proportion of general education in baccalaureate and diploma programs. Three credits are equivalent to a half-year course and six credits to a full-year course. Both programs require two to three hours of class contact per week for a half-year semester in a three-credit theory course. However, the 18 diploma programs that did specify vary in giving credits for clinical hours. For example, three of the 18 diploma programs do not give any credit for clinical hours, only to theory hours; six give one credit for one to one and a half clinical hours, thus giving clinical hours almost the same credit as theory hours. These nine programs are all from one province. The remaining nine programs give one

Table 1

*Averages of Professional and General Education Course Credits*

	Total Nursing Program Credits	Professional Education Credits	General Education Credits	General Education Proportions
Baccalaureate Programs (N=17)	136	74	62	46%
<sup>a</sup> Diploma Programs <sup>1</sup> (N=18)	122	96	26	24%
<sup>b</sup> Diploma Programs <sup>2</sup> (N=9)	105	79	26	26%

<sup>a</sup>Diploma Programs<sup>1</sup> includes all 18 diploma programs that specified their clinical credits. These programs showed considerable variance in the credits given for clinical hours.

<sup>b</sup>Diploma Programs<sup>2</sup> includes only the 9 diploma programs (of 18) that gave the same credits for clinical hours as the baccalaureate programs (e.g. one credit for 2-3 clinical hours).

credit for two to three clinical hours (except one program which gives one credit for four clinical hours), as do most baccalaureate programs. Because of the variations in credit for clinical hours, diploma programs are presented in two groups. Group 2 includes only the diploma programs that use the same practice as baccalaureate programs do in giving credits for clinical hours, and therefore it seems a more valid group for comparison of program and nursing credits.

A desirable balance between professional and general education courses that has been agreed upon by nursing educators is between 35 and 50 percent. The proportion of general education credits for baccalaureate programs (46%) is in this range, but the proportions in diploma programs (24% and 26%) are well below the ideal.

One reason for the differences seems related to a difficult issue in nursing – identifying different roles between the two types of graduates. There are no clear distinctions between what is expected of the two types of graduates and they have to take the same licensure examination. Diploma program

faculty must cover all materials relevant to "nursing", not "diploma nursing", in a shorter time – two to three years as opposed to the four in most baccalaureate programs. Accordingly, diploma programs have a higher density of nursing courses.

Professional programs have been criticized for the tendency to require only those subjects that support their profession (Dressel, Mayhew, & McGrath, 1959; Pillepich, 1962; Russell, 1959). The results of this study support this criticism. About 70% of general education course credits in both baccalaureate and diploma programs are devoted to courses in natural and social sciences, as required courses or designated electives, or both. Most required general education courses (in both nursing programs) are natural and behavioural science courses that have direct relevance to nursing. Required humanities courses, and courses in natural and social sciences not directly related to and supportive of nursing, are few in number. (See Tables 2, 3 & 4)

**Table 2**

***Number of Programs Requiring Natural Science Courses<sup>a</sup>***

Courses	Baccalaureate Programs (N=18)		Courses	Diploma Programs (N=30)	
	N	%		N	%
Microbiology*	16	89	Anatomy & Physiology*	27	75
Physiology	14	78	Microbiology*	15	42
Chemistry*	11	61	Pathophysiology*	7	19
Anatomy	10	56	Biochemistry*	4	11
Biochemistry*	9	50	Physiology	3	8
Biology	8	44	Pharmacology*	3	8
Nutrition*	6	33	Pathology*	3	8
Pathology*	4	22	Immunology*	3	8
Immunology*	3	17	Mathematics	2	6
Anatomy & Physiology	3	17	Anatomy	1	3
Epidemiology	2	11	Nutrition*	1	3
Pharmacology	2	11			

<sup>a</sup>Courses are listed in order of frequency of their being required in each type of program.

\*Two of these courses are integrated with one another and offered as one course in some programs (Baccalaureate = 4; Diploma = 8). For example, one baccalaureate program and three diploma programs combine microbiology and immunology into one required course.



The data in Table 2 indicate that anatomy, physiology, and microbiology are the natural science courses most commonly required by both baccalaureate and diploma programs. All but one baccalaureate program require physiology, either as a separate course or integrated with anatomy. However, the remaining program requires physiology provided by the nursing department. Thirteen of 18 baccalaureate programs require anatomy. Of the remaining four programs, two require anatomy taught by nursing departments and one indicates that it is incorporated into nursing courses. Microbiology is required as a separate course by 13 baccalaureate programs and, as integrated with another course, by another three baccalaureate programs.

Twenty-seven of 36 diploma programs provide anatomy and physiology as an integrated course and one program provides them as separate courses. Four additional diploma programs provide anatomy and physiology, but taught by nursing departments. It seems reasonable to expect that the remaining diploma programs incorporate anatomy and physiology into nursing courses. While most baccalaureate programs provide anatomy and physiology as separate courses, most diploma programs provide them as an integrated course. Some baccalaureate and diploma programs provide two natural science courses as an integrated course (Table 2).

In many diploma programs, an integrated anatomy and physiology course is the only required natural science course, but, in some, one more course is required (most commonly microbiology, followed by pathophysiology). In most baccalaureate programs, in addition to anatomy and physiology courses, biology or microbiology is required as well as chemistry or biochemistry. In some programs (baccalaureate = 6; diploma = 14) nursing departments provide a natural science course. Anatomy and physiology, pharmacology, pathophysiology and nutrition are courses often taught by nursing departments. However, even in programs that do this only one natural science course is usually provided.

Table 3 shows that psychology and sociology are the two most frequently required social science courses. Although the table seems to indicate that sociology is the most generally available course among diploma programs, psychology, under different course names, is actually the most available in both baccalaureate and diploma programs. Seven diploma programs require developmental psychology instead of psychology and nine diploma programs require developmental psychology in addition to psychology.

The main difference in social science curricula between the two programs is that no diploma programs require research and statistics courses, while many baccalaureate programs do. The actual numbers of baccalaureate programs requiring those courses (particularly research) are higher than the

Table 3

*Number of Programs Requiring Social Science Courses<sup>a</sup>*

Courses	Baccalaureate Programs (N=18)		Courses	Diploma Programs (N=36)	
	N	%		N	%
Psychology	15	83	Sociology*	30	83
Sociology#	11	61	Psychology*	27	75
Statistics*	8	44	Developmental		
Developmental			Psychology	16	44
Psychology#	8	44	Growth and		
Growth and			Development	9	25
Development	3	17	Family	8	22
Research*	3	17	Interpersonal		
Anthropology#	3	17	Relations	6	17
Business	2	11	Abnormal		
Social			Psychology*	2	6
Psychology#	2	11	Social		
Abnormal			Psychology*	1	3
Psychology	2	11			
Physical					
Psychology	1	6			
Political Science	1	6			
Family#	1	6			

<sup>a</sup>Courses are listed in order of frequency of their being required in each type of program.

\*Two of these courses are integrated with one another in some programs (Baccalaureate = 2; Diploma = 6).

#Six baccalaureate programs ask students to make an option(s) from two or three of these courses. For example, two programs ask students to take either sociology or anthropology.

number appearing in Table 3. While research is often taught by nursing departments (9 out of 12), statistics is seldom taught by nursing departments (2 out of 10). However, these are not included in the table because this study defines general education courses as non-nursing courses that are provided by departments other than nursing. Half of the baccalaureate programs require both statistics or research courses that are taught either by nursing or by other departments (two of them provide a course which integrates both research and statistics). Three other programs require only research, while two programs require only statistics. The remaining four programs do not require either course; however, two of the

programs offer research as a senior elective. Thus, both statistics and research courses have important places in the majority of baccalaureate programs.

**Table 4**  
*Number of Programs Requiring Humanities Courses<sup>a</sup>*

Courses	Baccalaureate Programs (N=18)		Courses	Diploma Programs (N=36)	
	N	%		N	%
English*	4	22	English/		
Philosophy	2	11	Communication	22	61
Ethics	1	6	Ethics	7	19
Religion	1	6			

<sup>a</sup>Courses are listed in order of frequency of their being required in each type of program.

\*One baccalaureate program requires students to take either English or French and another program requires students to take both English and French.

Both programs devote a small proportion of general education credits (baccalaureate = 10%; diploma = 16%) to humanities (Table 4). In addition, many of the humanities courses (17 out of 29) required by diploma programs are specially designed for nursing and/or health science students.

Twelve of 18 baccalaureate programs and 25 of 28 diploma programs require specifically designed courses in natural sciences , social sciences, and the humanities offered by departments other than nursing. Some natural science courses such as anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry are offered as specially designed courses by more than half the baccalaureate programs. Anatomy & physiology, microbiology, English/communication, and developmental psychology are offered as specially designed courses by more than half the diploma programs. It is common to find courses titled "Anatomy & Physiology for Nurses", "Nursing Psychology", or "Nursing Sociology".

A majority of faculty members believe that general education courses in each program should be different. Current general education course requirements support the assumption that, in addition to having all diploma

components, baccalaureate programs have different components. For example, most baccalaureate programs require a broader range of natural science courses than do most diploma programs; and social science courses such as statistics and research are required only by baccalaureate programs. For diploma programs, no distinctive components were identified.

Both diploma and baccalaureate nursing faculty seem to agree that natural and social science courses should be offered to both types of students, and that courses that are not directly related to nursing should only be offered to baccalaureate students. In addition, faculty of both nursing programs agreed that natural and social science courses that are supportive of nursing should be offered in greater depth to baccalaureate students.

Faculty members are more or less equally divided as to whether or not some general education courses, particularly in the natural sciences, should be specifically designed for nursing students (and perhaps health science students). The most common reason given by those in favour was that such courses are easier to learn when adapted to nursing purposes. Several faculty in both programs commented that specially designed courses allow faculty to focus directly on nursing content and to omit irrelevant materials. The most common reasons given by faculty who believe that general education courses should be broad and general were two: first, that specially designed courses might destroy the inherent value of general education; and secondly, that they will reduce the opportunities for nursing students to associate with students from other disciplines. Other reasons given were: specially designed courses could be "watered down"; they could limit the application of knowledge in other fields; and they could become problematic for credit transfer for further degrees.

### **Discussion and Implications**

The study indicates that nursing faculty attitudes and high concern toward general education are not reflected in the descriptions in program information materials. It seems necessary to take steps to bring nursing faculty concern into action.

The aim of general education is to develop students as educated persons, regardless of their chosen professions. General education is expected to cultivate common humanity by developing common knowledge, intellectual skills, and values that are important for both personal and professional life. The nursing profession works in collaboration with other health professions as well as with other fields such as law and politics. Sharing common knowledge, intellectual skills, and values with other disciplines will assist the nursing profession in improving its status.



General education is also expected to develop unity or integration of an individual's knowledge, skills, and personality. Although terms such as "unified curriculum" and "integrated curriculum" indicate efforts to implement the concept of unity, such efforts are mainly limited to the integration and unity of nursing knowledge and nursing skills. Quiring and Gray (1979) found that non-nursing courses in 53 baccalaureate programs in the United States were based on a patch-work rather than a systematic design. Both general and nursing components should be integrated meaningfully, instead of concentrating only on nursing. The implications of the study results will be discussed in three sections: general education goals, general education courses, and specially designed general education courses.

### *General education goals*

Faculty in both baccalaureate and diploma nursing programs value general education. Programs should therefore reflect these concerns. Faculty (baccalaureate = 90%; diploma = 70%) agree that the goals of general education include developing personality, self-understanding, and clarifying values in order to lead an effective and meaningful life as a person and citizen. The three outcomes of general education (broad knowledge, intellectual skills, and an integrated personality), identified by McGrath (1959), can be used as a general guideline in developing specific goals. A wide range of courses will help students acquire a broad knowledge base and understand the different intellectual skills and values involved in different disciplines, and the process will require a long-term commitment by both general and nursing department faculty.

### *General education courses*

Increasing the proportion of general education seems desirable in most diploma programs because most do not maintain the recommended balance. In a study by the Association of American Medical Colleges (1984) the panel recommends that broad study in humanities and social sciences is just as essential as study in the natural sciences. Both types of programs presently require very few humanities courses. It seems desirable to increase the number of humanities courses in order to expose nursing students to fundamental human concerns instead of concentrating only on the nurse-patient relationship. In recent years, many nursing educators have emphasized the value of humanistic concerns, such as ethics and value clarification, in nursing education.

It may also be desirable to expose students to some religious studies. Many people believe in their spiritual natures and live according to the beliefs within their chosen religion. Nurses should therefore have reasonable knowledge about different religions. Out of 54 nursing programs studied,

only one baccalaureate program requires religion courses and two other programs offer them as optional designated electives (e.g., any courses from religious studies and philosophy). Religion should also be offered to nursing students for personal enrichment. They should be given chances to learn the main issues about human and spiritual concerns, and to make their own decisions about those issues.

An increase in the number of social science courses within both baccalaureate and diploma programs would increase the ability of students to understand such social constructions as political science, economics, business, international affairs, and government. Now most required social science courses are ancillary to nursing (see Table 3), and are more or less concerned with understanding man as a social being but not with understanding social structure as a whole. The great majority of nurses are women, and women have traditionally been less active in social structures. This should change.

This researcher agrees with the opinions of McGrath (1959) and Russell (1959) that, to improve professional status, sound general education is essential. Amos (1985) also claims that "The integrity of professional nursing education can only be assured if there is an appropriate relationship between liberal education and professional education" (p. 44).

### *Specially designed general education courses*

General education courses are often viewed as being for professional purposes only. This is particularly evident in the practice of providing general education courses that are specially designed for nursing or health science students. Most diploma programs (89%) and two-thirds of the baccalaureate programs (67%) offer such courses. These courses should be limited. One of the main rationales for nursing education to move into the higher educational system was to provide learning opportunities that are enjoyed by other professions. Providing many general education courses that are designed only for nursing or health science students vitiates this purpose. In extreme cases, other nursing students are the only classmates nursing students have during their program years. Diploma program faculty showed remarkably low satisfaction with their program's performance in providing nursing students opportunities to share ideas and experiences with other students. Forty-eight percent of them were dissatisfied with that performance, while only 14% of baccalaureate faculty were dissatisfied.

In some situations, general education courses are specially sequenced to meet the special needs of students who are majoring in those courses. In such cases, specially designed courses for nursing or health science students

are important; however they should still be broad enough to be offered to students from other disciplines.

One method of encouraging the student to acquire a good general background would be to introduce free electives in their programs. Students would make choices according to their own interests and would mix with other students on the campus. Baccalaureate programs offer a considerable proportion of general education credits as free electives (22%), although there is limited emphasis on the humanities. More than half of the diploma programs do not offer any free electives.

However, although it is desirable to give some freedom of choice to students, it does not seem ideal to leave so many elective courses completely open, especially when no, or extremely few, humanities courses are required. It is therefore suggested that, of the total credits for humanities and free electives, more credits (about 60%) be given to humanities than to free electives (about 40%), thus ensuring that all students take an adequate number of humanities courses. In addition, nursing programs which offer many general education courses supportive of nursing could require students to use free electives only for courses unrelated to nursing.

### Conclusion

This study examined the practice of general education in 54 baccalaureate and diploma programs by studying program information materials and it examined the attitudes of nursing directors and faculty toward general education by studying 209 questionnaire responses. The study reveals that very few programs have stated goals of general education and that most of the required courses are courses directly supportive of, and relevant to, nursing. However, the majority of nursing faculty consider general education to be as important as professional education.

Nursing educators should design curricula that will cultivate not only professional competency but also personal competency – knowledge, skills and character that are required to live life effectively. Long-range considerations of improving nursing's status as a profession seem to depend just as much on wisdom gained from a knowledge of humanities and social sciences that are not directly related to nursing as on knowledge of the natural and behavioural sciences that are supportive of nursing.

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This study was done as the author's Master's thesis (University of Toronto, 1984).



## RÉSUMÉ

### **Formation générale en sciences infirmières: pratiques actuelles et attitudes des professeurs**

La présente étude a pour objectif d'approfondir le cadre des programmes de formation générale en sciences infirmières. Plus précisément, on s'est penché sur les pratiques actuelles et les attitudes des professeurs à l'égard de la formation générale et l'on a comparé les programmes de baccalauréat et de diplôme d'études collégiales au Canada. Le chercheur a examiné 54 programmes de sciences infirmières (baccalauréat = 18; diplôme = 36) en se fondant à la fois sur des prospectus et des annuaires et sur les opinions des directeurs et des professeurs des programmes de sciences infirmières recueillies par le biais d'un questionnaire adressé à 21 directeurs de sciences infirmières (baccalauréat = 6; diplôme = 15) oeuvrant dans le cadre de 49 programmes. Les résultats indiquent que les deux types de programmes sont axés avant tout sur la formation professionnelle, tout particulièrement les programmes de diplôme. On a également noté qu'il existe des différences entre la mise en pratique des programmes et les attitudes des professeurs. La majorité des professeurs de sciences infirmières sont d'avis que la formation générale et la formation professionnelle sont aussi importantes l'une que l'autre, bien que les pratiques de deux types de programmes soient axées sur la formation professionnelle. D'une manière plus générale, on a noté de plus grandes divergences d'opinion entre les professeurs d'un même type de programme plutôt qu'entre les professeurs des deux types de programmes. La répartition des opinions parmi les professeurs de niveau collégial et les professeurs de niveau baccalauréat suit les mêmes schèmes sur de nombreuses questions.