

Literature review to seek the direction of the evaluation of nursing education curriculums

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Abstract. In this study, to discuss the suitability of the procedure for and elements of the evaluation of nursing education curriculums, study trends for such evaluation were analyzed. The future direction of the evaluation of nursing education curriculums viewed based on the results of previous studies on the evaluation of nursing education curriculums is as follows. Effort to evaluate nursing education programs through the collection of more diverse data is necessary, and since the control of the quality of nursing skills education is very important because of the nature of the specialty, the evaluation should be more practical rather than being limited to the existing conventional accreditation and evaluation methods, specifically reviews of self-evaluation reports and evaluation by visits and interviews.

Keywords: Curriculum, Nursing education, Integrative review

1 Introduction

Recently, competency-based, performance-centered curriculum evaluation in the second period of nursing department accreditation evaluation has attracted great attention. In particular, curriculum evaluation, which account for a major part of accreditation evaluation, has huge effects on nursing education. Therefore, analytical studies of whether the direction and scope of nursing departments' education and evaluation pursued by nursing department accreditation evaluation are appropriate, whether the grounds for evaluation are valid and clear and whether the evaluation well reflects the characteristics of the global and Korean situations are very important.

The purpose of this study is to discuss the suitability of the procedure for and elements of the nursing education curriculum evaluation currently implemented. This is based on a theoretical discussion and literature review on curriculum evaluation with a view to finding a desirable direction of nursing education curriculum evaluation that is suitable for the Korean context.

2 Research in the evaluation of nursing education curriculums

In foreign countries, studies of nursing education curriculum evaluation have been conducted from diverse viewpoints. In particular, the evaluation of curriculum operation, comparison and analysis of curriculum systems, and experience of stakeholders in curriculums have recently been presented in studies of how nursing education programs continuously review curriculums for quality control [1], comparison between the outcomes of traditional nursing curriculums and those of accelerated nursing curriculums [2], and experience in teaching of clinical immersion curriculums [3]. Such research seems applicable as major grounds for seeking the direction of nursing education curriculum evaluation.

In particular, a limitation of curriculum evaluation studies presented by Roxburgh et al. [4] was that although expectations about nurses' qualifications had been continuously changing every time a major change occurred and the paradigm had been changed approximately every three decades, curriculum evaluation had not immediately responded to such changes and there had been no study that evaluated all of the contents, processes, and performance of curriculums. They suggested that stricter evaluation of nursing education curriculums was necessary and that the content of the evaluation should encompass not only the aspect of performance, but also that of processes.

Meanwhile, Giddens and Morton [5] argued that curriculum evaluation is a very important part of program evaluation, and suggested that as new issues of curriculum evaluation, attention should be paid to how to reinforce links between curriculum subjects about theories and clinical experience, as well as how to link prerequisite basic subjects with application-centered learning activities. In particular, they asserted that more attention should be paid to a particular part of curriculums, that of clinical training subjects.

Extremely few studies have been conducted on nursing education curriculums evaluation in Korea. To review the contents chronologically, such studies began with research published in the 1990s on the purpose and importance of curriculum evaluation [6], followed by studies on the evaluation of curriculums (in particular, a transfer students' course called RN-BSN) in a university in the 2000s and thereafter [6,7], studies of the evaluation of the educational performance of integrated curriculums [8], and studies on the results of nursing department accreditation evaluation and the validity of the contents that mention some aspects of curriculum evaluation [9]. All of these studies focused on curriculum evaluation. That is, although issues regarding curriculum evaluation began to be raised from the 1990s in the academic world of nursing, actual research was mainly conducted on the design, operation, and evaluation of certain curriculums rather than the direction or quality control of undergraduate curriculums in general. Although thus far, a consensus about the importance of curriculum evaluation has been researched to some extent, a general definition of the contents of evaluation is necessary because this will be able to enhance the validity of evaluation.

3 Desirable directions for curriculum evaluation in Korean nursing education

On reviewing the contents of the criteria for accreditation evaluation in terms of the second period nursing education evaluation and accreditation presented by the Korea Accreditation Board of Nursing, it can be seen that the contents present the direction of overall curriculum evaluation relatively concretely. However, they provide relatively abstract criteria in relation the operation of theoretical education or nursing skill education. Therefore, the contents can lead to the question of whether the quality of nursing education curriculums can be evaluated using the current accreditation criteria. As a result, the following steps should be taken to set up a desirable direction for nursing education curriculum evaluation in the future: 1) setting the definition of nursing education curriculums as the subject of curriculum evaluation; 2) carrying out comprehensive evaluation of the contents, operation, and performance of curriculums; 3) reinforcing the role of formative evaluation in curriculum evaluation; 4) enhancing the appropriateness and effectiveness of nursing skill education evaluation; and 5) providing practical evaluation of diverse stakeholders.

4 Conclusion

Through the above-mentioned considerations, the following can be seen: 1) The operational definition of curriculums for nursing education curriculum evaluation should not be a list of curriculum subjects, but instead should encompass an overall experience ranging from the design and operation to evaluation of curriculums. 2) Since nursing education curriculums have historically changed in different social contexts, it is necessary to deeply consider the aspects of curriculums that must be supplemented in order to enhance the professional competence of nurses to the level expected by contemporary society, as well as to increase occupational elasticity to overcome the problem of the discontinuance of careers, which is one of problems currently faced by the nursing community.

The authors of the present work suggest that evaluation models should be drawn that can improve the ambiguous concepts and somewhat inappropriate evaluation items presented in the current criteria for nursing education accreditation evaluation. Such models can also enhance the effectiveness of evaluation and studies for simulation evaluation and perception surveys based on the models should be carried out.

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