

## PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND PROFESSION VALUES TRANSPOSED INTO NURSING EDUCATION

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### Abstract

Professional identity is the concept that describes how we perceive ourselves in our occupational context and how we communicate it to others. Professional identity is not static, but fluid. It is strongly influenced by how we see ourselves, how we perceive others and how we are viewed by society.

Professional values are inherent characteristics of every profession and are part of the professional identity. Personal values are a powerful tool that influences our lives. They are the standards that each of us defines in order to live according to them and often influence our attitude and behavior. The profession of nurse/ midwives is defined by the values that each practitioner experiences every day in relation to his profession and each patient with whom he interacts.

The professionalism of nursing profession requires that the nurses, midwives to be able to provide quality health care services adapted to the society healthy needs, no matter age, social position, gender, political and sexual orientation or other differentiation criteria. In this way they will be able to increase the population's health level.

The Order of Nurses and Midwives of Romania implemented POLMED project which objective was to develop a set of fundamental professional values for nurses and midwives, for the benefit of the medical-patient staff relationship. The project aimed at developing an analysis of European public policies on the values of nursing and midwifery, conducting a survey of the current situation in Romania on the values of nursing and midwifery by involvement of 200 nationally selected nurses and midwives, as well as the training of 45 nurses and midwives in the design and evaluation of public policies.

As a result, the ability of medical personnel to meet the citizen's need to have quality health system is directly linked first and foremost to the reform of the educational system of professional training, which internalizes a values system centered on professionalism, empathy towards the patient and cooperation with patients and other categories of professionals in the medical system.

The paper work is divide in two parts, the first part presents a survey in order to develop a set of fundamental professional values for nurses and midwives, and the second part presents the way these values were transposed in the nursing education. The paper presents a study on the ways of transposing the professional identity and profession values into the nursing education.

**Keywords:** *Education, values, identity, nursing, profession.*

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### 1. Introduction

Founded in 1950, the current Sanitary Post High School "Fundeni" is the most important state educational institution in Romania in the field of training in Nursing and a center for continuous training of teachers in this field.

In collaboration with the Order of General Nurses, Midwives and Nurses in Romania (OAMGMAMR) which is a professional and regulatory organization with the role of developing norms and rules for practicing the profession of generalist nurse, midwife and nurse, so that professionals can provide quality services to patients, in safety and security conditions, the Sanitary Post High School "Fundeni" implemented the above mentioned POLMED project which objective was to develop a set of fundamental professional values for nurses and midwives, for the benefit of the medical-patient staff relationship.

The order authorizes the exercise of the profession, registers in its database all general nurses, midwives and nurses in Romania and also judges the deviations from the rules of ethics and deontology.

The Romanian health-care system has been the subject of a comprehensive reform process in recent years, which has sought to ensure increased quality in the health sector and patient confidence in the health services they receive. Actions to modernize health-care infrastructure, provision of equipment and devices to meet the current patient's expectations and technological innovation context, have been

consistently supported. A number of measures have also been adopted in recent years to financially stimulate the retention of medical staff in the country and thus counteract the negative effects of the migration of professionals from the system.

In this context, a joint, unified, coherent and committed action, aimed at improving the relationship between the patient and the health-care professionals (nurses and midwives), becomes necessary.

## 2. Research methodology

This project was prepared with participation, through a comprehensive consultation process of professionals in the field, members of OAMGMAMR, in order to identify essential values that must guide the professional activity of nurses and midwives in Romania.

The research explored two directions: a questionnaire-based survey to identify the main guidelines and options related to the values of the profession and developing a qualitative analysis of guidelines and options on the professional values of nurses and midwives, through the focus group technique. Both the analysis and report contributed to the elaboration of a public policy project on the values of the nurse and midwife professions.

The sample for qualitative analysis was 806 nurses and midwives from all 8 development regions of Romania that completed a questionnaire-based survey. The data processing has been done using SPSS 20.0.

Qualitative analysis of guidelines and options on the professional values of nurses and midwives through the focus group technique: within this subactivity, 200 participants, nurses and midwives from public health facilities were selected, taking part in 8 focus groups, organized one each in each development region. Moderated discussions with the participants took place in the focus groups, every important result of the quantitative research was analyzed, with all participants given the opportunity to express their views on it. A research report based on the qualitative data collected from the organized focus groups was prepared upon completion of this activity.

The qualitative and quantitative data and information obtained under the 2 sub-activities mentioned were integrated and the activity was completed by developing a survey into the current situation on the values of the nurse and midwife profession.

Three training (and implicitly consultation) sessions of 45 people from among OAMGMAMR representatives from all development regions, on public policies, were also organized. Experts from within the organization were identified; they worked as a team to develop a summary material reflecting the opinions expressed by their colleagues during the consultative process.

Thus, more than 1000 members of the organization were directly involved in this consultative process, representing all branches of OAMGMAMR and all types of fields of activity of nurses and midwives in Romania.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. For quantitative research

As part of the consultation process carried out at national level, the following were identified as essential values for the professions of nurse and midwife in Romania: **professionalism, cooperation and empathy**.

The three identified essential values are defined as follows:

**Professionalism** is the essential value in the exercise of the professions of nurse and midwife.

**Cooperation** involves establishing relationships with all persons involved – members of the medical team, patients, their families – based on real and open communication, so that the care act includes the perspectives of all those involved.

**Empathy** is an essential professional value in the profession of nurse/midwife, defined implicitly and explicitly by care for the patient.

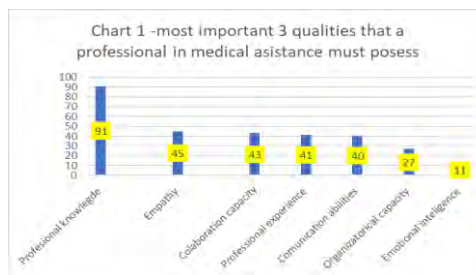
### 3.2. For qualitative research

The subjects of the research were approximately 200 nurses / midwives who participated in the 8 focus groups conducted between October and December 2018. The main objectives of the research were to obtain useful information to clarify / explain a number of issues that they resulted from quantitative research, as well as the analysis of the importance and applicability in practice of the specific values of the nursing and midwifery professions. The research data were collected using audio and video recordings, supplemented by notes taken by the three public policy experts who moderated the focus groups.

The information obtained in the qualitative research provided a number of clarifications and additions regarding this hierarchy of values. First of all, the majority focus group participants pointed out that having professional knowledge, it should be considered an a priori condition for practicing the profession and not necessarily a professional value in itself. Second, there were participants who claimed that having professional knowledge that is not implemented with empathy and collaboration are not enough. Third, many of the participants considered that, without a doubt, empathy and the ability to collaborate represent specific professional values that can make the difference between a good professional in the field and a weaker one, but often the oversupply of tasks is a serious obstacle for their transposition into everyday professional behaviors. In addition, empathy unaccompanied by self-protection can be dangerous to oneself mental integrity of staff (which can lead to burnout) and therefore unnecessary in itself.

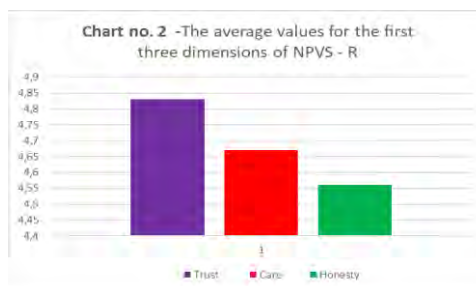
Last but not least for many participants "emotional intelligence" (last place in the table below) was in fact assimilated with empathy and the ability to collaborate, communication.

Chart 1.



For analyzing the specific of nursing profession in the survey was introduced a professional value scale specific to the nursing field, Nurses Professional Value Scale – Revised (NPVS-R). The results of the analysis of the data obtained at the NPVS-R scale will be presented below as average values, according to the way the original scale is used by the authors (maximum possible value - 5, minimum possible value - 1). The answers received from NPVS-R scale place in the first three places, were **trust**, **care** and **honesty** (chart no. 2). As we can see, all three value dimensions are "built" around the patient. Below are the elements of professional conduct / behaviors the most important professional values that are subsumed in the three values:

Chart 2.



The additions brought by the qualitative data, regarding these aspects related to the transposition of the values in appropriate professional conduct pointed out the following aspects:

- the need for continuing medical education to be real, not formal (determined only by the need to obtain the annual number of credits):

- the importance of education in general - the problem that those who are in initial training are either lacking a serious motivation or do not have the skills to recommend them for this profession; concern about the large number of diplomas offered by public and private institutions, without liability - which leads to a decrease in professional skills in the system; the need for nurses / midwives with more professional experience to take it upon themselves to raise the professional level of their younger colleagues:

Within the focus groups, most of the participants considered as most important and, at the same time, most possible to transpose, in practice, the values that are subsumed under the principle of respecting the rights of patients of different categories.

On the other hand, the professional values for which the highest differences between importance and applicability were recorded were respect for professional dignity, recognition of professional

boundaries and team spirit / collaboration. The main explanations for these gaps, provided by the focus group participants, were as follows:

- ✓ difficulties caused by the "damaged" image of the profession among the population, generated mainly by the way in which the media presents only the negative aspects;
- ✓ the distinction between autonomous and delegated competences (received from the doctors they work with) is not always clear and respected; in addition, the mentality that the nurse is subordinate to the doctor, having the obligation to carry out whatever is required of him is one that does not help in setting these limits;
- ✓ differences in medical teams (between doctors and nurses, but also between different generations of nurses).

As a result, the ability of medical personnel to meet the citizen's need to have quality health system is directly linked first and foremost to the reform of the educational system of professional training, which internalizes a values system centered on professionalism, empathy towards the patient and cooperation with patients and other categories of professionals in the medical system.

#### **4. Professional identity and profession values transposed into nursing education**

The practice of the nurse is incorporated into the social practice on a set of values that give it meaning and significance. These values form an axiogram (hierarchical scale) of the profession, which is the statement of guiding the nurse's practice and justifying his actions. Values are generally defined as beliefs or principles that influence the behavior. Values serve as a compass in setting standards for decision making and guiding individual behavior. Michal Rassin suggested that values are "basic beliefs that motivates both social and professional behavior".

The beginning of the professional practice of the nurse can be attributed to the England of the 9th century, respectively to the school founded by Florence Nightingale. Florence Nightingale (1860) defined the practice of the nurse as "responsible for one's personal health ... and what the nurse must do ... is to put the patient in his best condition"

Personal values are a powerful tool that influences our lives. They are the standards that each of us defines in order to live according to them and often influence our attitude and behavior. As each individual is characterized by his own values, so as the nursing profession is defined by the values that each practitioner experiences every day in relation to his profession and each patient with whom he interacts.

Professional identity is the concept that describes how we perceive ourselves in our occupational context and how we communicate it to others. Professional identity can mean different things to different professionals who are active in the field. Professional identity is not static, but fluid. It is strongly influenced by how we see ourselves, how we perceive others and how we are viewed by society.

In present the activity of the nurse is not always clear - for some the nurse helps the doctor, for others the nurse practices an autonomous profession. Depending on the activities they carry out, the role of the nurse can be: own or delegate.

Professional values are demonstrated in ethical codes. In fact, the ethical codes clarify nursing profession practices, the quality of professional care, and professional norms.

The code of ethics and deontology of the generalist nurse, the midwife and the Romanian nurse includes a set of principles and rules that represent the fundamental values on which the generalist nurse profession, the midwife profession and the nurse profession on the territory Romania is based.

The curriculum establishes the foundation of what students are expected to know, do and understand through their education experiences. In post-secondary education – level 5 the curriculum is focused on learning outcomes / competencies. The curriculum was developed based on professional training standards. Each of the school specializations has its own standards, curriculum and school programs for the professional qualification.

In post-secondary education - level 5, the curriculum is focused on learning outcomes / competencies. Competences, built in terms of expected learning outcomes at the end of the education and training process, are essential components of the vocational training standard and are grouped into units of learning outcomes/competencies. Before 2018 the learning outcomes were expressed only by knowledge and abilities. From the 2018 the new standard of professional training and the new curriculum were applied to the general nurse, according to Order of the Ministry of National Education no. 3499 / 29.03.2018 - regarding the approval of the professional training standard, of the curriculum and of the school programs for the professional qualification Generalist nurse, level 5, of the National Qualifications Framework for which the training is ensured through the postgraduate pre-university education.

Learning outcomes are expressed now through knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired during different formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences.

The key competencies referred to in the Vocational Training Standard are integrated in the units of results of general or specialized technical learning. They are also integrated into the units of results of general or specialized technical learning, professional knowledge and skills in Directive EU / 55/2013 on the recognition of professional qualifications.

In the Curriculum of Sanitary Post High School “Fundeni” are presented the core professional competencies of Directive EU /55/2013 integrated into content such as for example: competence to independently diagnose the necessary medical care, the ability to provide information to individuals, families and groups of people, competence to collaborate effectively with other actors in the health sector, the ability to independently ensure the quality of health care and its evaluation, the ability to analyze the quality of the assistance provided to improve it professional practice of generalist nurse. Also there are presented knowledge about the nature and ethics (fundamental values ) of the nursing profession that a nurse must possess. The sanitary post high school emphasizes the professional values resulted from the research in the school Curriculum (in all nursing Modules).

## 5. Conclusions

1. The professional values (**professionalism, cooperation and empathy**), are seen as distinct but also as closely interconnected
2. The three professional values mentioned above can be transposed in terms of professional behaviors, as aspects that define an act of quality care through: **trust, care and honesty**.
3. The relationship between the patient and those involved in the act of care as an active type of relationship, in which the family of the patient is involved, consulted, informed.
4. The Sanitary School through its Curriculum emphasizes the professional values resulted from the research made by OAMGMAMR.

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