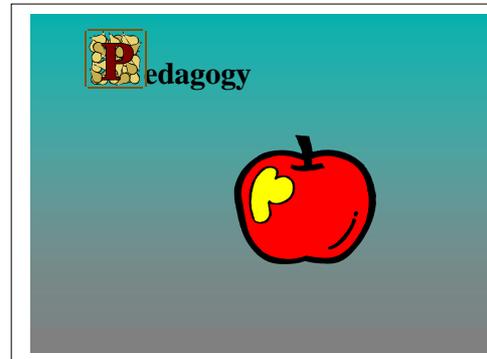


# THE PROGRAMME APPROACH

By Margot Phaneuf 22/05/03

## WHAT IT IS?

At this time, education in nursing in Québec is basically organised by programme. It is an orientation of a systematic nature which means that certain concepts of a main discipline are linked to certain elements of related disciplines in the training programme or to other courses of this discipline. In this perspective, a course does not exist in isolation: it is a part of the setting (corpus) and tightly linked to all the concepts (notions) of the related classes (courses). Everything is presented in a coherent fashion, by putting concepts of different origin in relation and in context.



This type of programme represents an important challenge, however, because it implies that the teacher establishes these links or proposes them to be discovered by the students, and in this latter case, also has to supervise and complete their contributions by essential additions. But one cannot presume that the student can establish these links alone. The programme approach aims to prevent this difficulty. Furthermore, an approach by competence such as the one proposed by the Ministry of Education in Quebec\* implicitly requires the necessity of establishing relations among various disciplines.

### Definition of an Approach by Competence

- It is a comprehensive concept of integrated knowledge, including acquired experience and personal evolution, appropriate for a given aspect of health care which, when mobilized in a concrete situation, allows the nurse to refer to cognitive, psychomotor, organisational and technical skills, and to demonstrate adapted socio-emotional behaviours, the whole, working in synergy and rendering possible the exercise of nursing at a level of performance compatible with the role and functions of that profession.

ing of a student nurse. In some ways, the programme approach and the approach structured by competence have intimate, almost blood links between them. They are both of a systemic nature. The former, the programme approach, is more particularly of an organisational nature, and aims to establish exchanges among the teachers to determine mutual logical links between related disciplines and nursing courses and to come to agreement(s) on suitable time frames.

Since a competence is by definition an integrated set of theoretical knowledge, of psychomotor, organisational and technical skills, of values, and of adapted socio-emotional bearings and behaviours, contributions from other disciplines, such as psychology and sociology, become essential in the personal development and in

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### Programme Approach Characteristics

- The programme approach is of an organisational nature and requires:
- communication among teachers,
  - establishment of mutual logical links between related disciplines and nursing classes,
  - agreement among teachers of different disciplines to place the whole in a suitable time frame.

## Competence Approach Characteristics

This approach is of an abstract and qualitative nature. It refers to:

- the nature of course content
- the means of competence integration to face the reality of healthcare
- continuity with already acquired knowledge
- links among various concepts, as between nursing classes and those of the other disciplines.

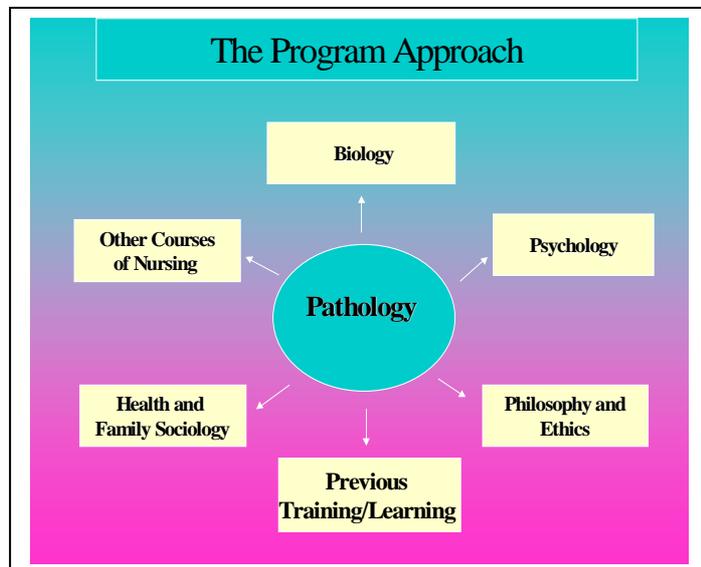
The latter, the approach by competence, is rather abstract and qualitative. Although in this approach one can ignore neither organisational structures, nor notions of time and sequence in the programme, it refers more directly to the nature of the contents of the courses and to the means of their incorporation so that the students can better face the challenges of providing health care.

Indeed, the approach by competence goes even further. It also has to take into account previously acquired knowledge. It places new concepts in a logical continuity and establishes not only links

among the various concepts of the courses that they belong to, but also links with concepts in the other disciplines in the training programme.

## APPLICATION

Regarding the care of somebody suffering from a given pathology, the teacher has to establish links or see that links are established (by the student or by other teachers) with the other disciplines in the nursing programme. The enclosed diagrams illustrate that. So, to encourage the acquisition of such competence, to favour the transfer of skills and knowledge, the teacher has to organize educational strategies in such a way that the students can incorporate and utilise these links.



For example, to study a given pathology the student must foresee the links between the

anatomy of the affected organs or of the affected system, their physiology and various processes, their links with metabolism, the immune system, circulation, etc. and all concepts, learned in biology. The student must also make links to disease prevention and to different techniques and organisational care strategies seen in the nursing programme. The student must also understand the links between this pathology and the sociological context of this pathology's development or the vulnerability of certain persons (low socio-economic

## ADVANTAGES OF AN APPROCH ORGANISED BY COMPETENCE

- To develop a broad vision of nursing problems
- To know the factors which influence them, the elements of risk
- To allow a serious reflection on nursing situations
- To favour decision-making

status, hygiene deficiency, alcoholism) learned in health sociology and family sociology. Other links should also be made with the psychological profile of the individual patient (professional stress, family conflicts, mental health) which is a part of psychology and psychiatric courses. It's the same for the other constituents of the programme, for instance, those referring to philosophy and ethics or to legal elements. The development of such a training can not be made in a linear way. It is rather constructed in a network structure, a little like a spider web, where various concepts belonging to the other disciplines of the programme and to the classes inside the nursing discipline are selected and are put into identified links.

## **WHAT IS THE PROGRAMME APPROACH USEFUL FOR?**

This approach presents several advantages. It allows the student to develop a broad vision of nursing problems which correspond to those she will have to solve later in health care. Knowing principles, factors influencing the situation, as well as elements of risk and prevention for certain problems helps the student to understand what she has to do in a real situation. This manner of presenting a nursing training programme facilitates reflection essential to making decisions with consequences as serious

as those that must be assumed by nurses. For example, if the students are well informed of all the principal links to be established with the other disciplines and the other courses of their programme, they develop better clinical judgment and consequently, work in a more responsible way, as real and competent health professionals.

### **WHAT IS THE PROGRAM APPROACH USEFUL FOR?**

- ❖ **To avoid the compartmentalization of knowledge, the functioning by "drawers"**
- ❖ **To favour better integration of concepts from different origins**
- ❖ **To broaden the intellectual horizon of the nursing students**

This approach favours a better integration and a better application of knowledge, and a broader intellectual and emotional outlook on reality. All these were taught in the past but in a more separate way. Regrettably, we then observed too often that the students worked "by drawers", so to say. For example, when a class of psychology or sociology had ended, they closed these drawers and never, or almost never, established links with what they had to do at the bed side of a patient. Consequently, when they were in problematic situations, they considered only a few aspects of the patient's difficulty, concentrating especially on the

### **WHAT DOES A PROGRAM APPROACH INVOLVE?**

- ❖ **Meetings among the teachers of different disciplines**
- ❖ **Discussion between teachers**
- ❖ **Open-mindedness towards others, their knowledge and their experience**
- ❖ **Shedding a mutual light on the objectives of the nursing teachers and others, and on the time frame to be adopted**

physical aspects. A programme approach should compensate for these serious limitations.

## **WHAT DOES A PROGRAMME APPROACH INVOLVE?**

A programme approach requires a whole set of relations between the departments involved, with discussions about their mutual objectives and the establishment of relevant links between certain concepts. It involves those who are concerned through their respective courses and who possess useful interrelations.

Although this dialogue represents an important challenge at the level of the teachers' work organisation, it also favours an interesting sharing of responsibilities, an effective collective commitment within the process of a socially important vocational training. Without such agreement it is completely impossible to apply a programme approach. The stakes in this development become a real change of internal departmental culture, but its advantages strongly outweigh any disadvantages. A more complete integration of knowledge is really the best means to favour a training which leads to competence.

\* <http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/>

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